JOHN WHEELWRIGHT

1592-1679

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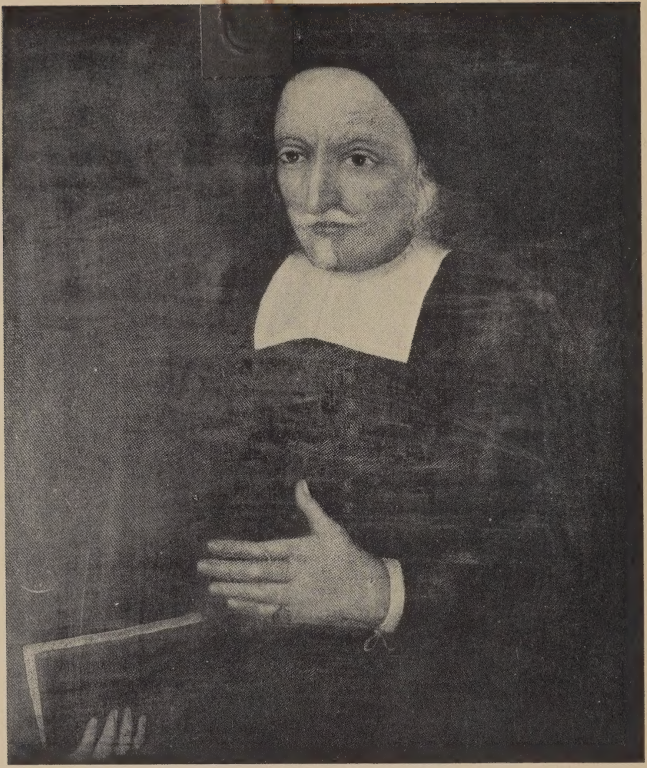

John Whelewright

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1592–1679

BY

JOHN HEARD, JR.

DIRECT DESCENDANT IN THE TENTH GENERATION

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> 'Like the true gentlemen they were, these pioneer pastors accepted hardship and privation without complaint, happy to devote their gifts to bringing up their people in the way of Truth. To them, more than to any other class, New England owes what she has been, and what she is.'
>
> SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON

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TO

A. E. N.

A DIRECT DESCENDANT IN THE TENTH GENERATION WHO FIRST
SUGGESTED THIS BIOGRAPHY AND TO THOSE OTHER DESCENDANTS
WHO ASSISTED IN ITS PUBLICATION, THIS SMALL VOLUME
IS DEDICATED

CONTENTS

I. BACKGROUNDS 3

II. OLD ENGLAND 9

III. NEW ENGLAND 21

IV. DRAMATIS PERSONÆ 29

V. EXCURSIONS AND ALARUMS 41

VI. EXETER 64

VII. WELLS — RECONCILIATION OR SURRENDER? 82

VIII. HAMPTON AND HOME 97

IX. THE VISIT TO ENGLAND 107

X. SALISBURY AND THE END OF THE ROAD 115

AFTERWORD — JOHN WHEELWRIGHT'S DESCENDANTS 125

ILLUSTRATIONS

John Wheelwright *Frontispiece*

Gravestone of John Wheelwright at Salisbury, Massachusetts 122

Stone over the Wheelwright Tomb in King's Chapel Burying-Ground in Boston 128

Esther Wheelwright, Mother Superior of the Ursuline Convent at Quebec 136

JOHN WHEELWRIGHT

1592 — 1679

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUNDS

It took the world a great many centuries to discover that there is no such thing as an isolated fact, and that everything — be it a star, a plant, a gas, an animal, or a man — is the result of a precedent cause and the cause of a subsequent result, and, furthermore, that any phenomenon can be understood only by studying it in the light of the forces which produced it and in its relation to the forces which it in turn produces. Slow as the world has been in grasping this fundamental, but to most people revolutionary fact, it nevertheless has, in matters scientific, accepted it. Only very recently, certainly only since the middle of the nineteenth century, have men of letters applied it to the field of biography. That is one reason why the subjects of the earlier biographies seem so impersonal, so incomprehensible, so dead. To read, no matter in how painstaking detail, that Cleopatra, Richard of England, or Cromwell was born in such a year, did such and such things and ultimately died, is like studying a geological problem without considering the history and solar origin of this planet. Few individuals are interesting *qua* individuals, and John Wheelwright, opinionist and banished clergyman of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, is interesting to us only as a product of his past, as an exponent of his present, and as a contributor to his future which is our present. What he actually did and the doctrines which, to his personal discomfiture, he preached are immaterial and not *per se* particularly interesting. Why he did so, and what came thereof is another matter.

Wheelwright was born in the last years of the sixteenth century, and the sixteenth century wrought greater changes in England than had any previous, or than did any subsequent hundred years. It was during the sixteenth century that England crystallized from a rather undefined insular power, constantly overflowing into France, a large part of which she claimed and precariously held, into a definite nation. Feudalism had died in all but name and traditional formalities. The Renaissance had reawakened interest in art and letters; it had marked the emergence of Europe from the stupid and almost animal carnage of the Dark Ages, but it had also marked, which was far more important, the renewal of individual thought which spelled the downfall of the temporal tyranny of the Catholic Church, based as it was on a form of blind and cringing faith, the corner-stone of which rested on the prohibition to think. Henry VIII's rebellion against Rome may have been and probably was the result more of selfish and political motives than of any serious spiritual convictions. It nevertheless was an act highly characteristic of the times and one which would have been wholly impossible a hundred years earlier. In England Rome's battle-front had been broken, but her reserves delivered a counter-attack which, temporarily at least, was so successful that when it in turn was repulsed, the people of England were in no mood to take further risks of the sort. Bloody Mary and the Roman and Spanish Inquisitions were not episodes which England cared to have repeated. Furthermore, the power of Spain, thinly disguised under the cloak of Catholicism, was too serious a national menace not to stimulate a general resistance, an important element of which was a bitter religious reaction.

The latter half of the sixteenth century — the so-called Elizabethan Age — was a period of adventure afield and of experimentation with the new liberty which the Renaissance and the Reformation had made possible. These were the days of great expeditions and explorations in remote lands, of the quest of the short cut to Cathay and to other regions reputedly paved with gold. And at home, poets, dramatists, men in all fields of letters and of art, were experimenting and were succeeding. Indeed, the late Professor Barrett Wendell once remarked that could the Elizabethan Age be symbolized in a coat of arms, the shield should show a ship sailing westwards between the Pillars of Hercules with below the motto, '*Ultra ad ultima.*'

During these years England felt herself reasonably safe from Rome, and although it was common knowledge that Elizabeth and some of her immediate court had leanings toward Catholicism, the people at large were too interested in other matters to concentrate on religion. Meanwhile, liberty of thought flourished and the roots of Protestantism grew deeper and stronger and wider, preparing to nourish the oak tree of Anglicanism and of Puritanism which later and forever was to overshadow English life, mental as well as physical.

Such was the world into which John Wheelwright was born. Indeed, he was born just about the time when Rome made her last open and mediævalistic attack against the newly raised bastions of Protestantism. Had he, as a small boy or even as a young man, happened to walk along certain parts of the English coast, he would have seen the ribs of the galleons of the Armada sticking up through the sand. Undoubtedly he did see in many houses bits of Spanish finery less valuable in themselves than as constant reminders of those forces which were so fundamentally antagonistic to the new England. To be sure, the threat of the Armada was not as serious as it had appeared when Spain's floating fortresses were filling the Channel. At best — or at worst — a victory by Spanish Catholicism would have been but temporary; young Protestant England might have bowed, but she was already too tough to break. Probably the most lasting effect of the great naval expedition of 1588, other than crippling Spain, was forever to assure the impossibility of England's coming again within the Papal fold. The immediate effect was to identify more closely than ever, in the minds of Englishmen, Catholicism with invasion, the Pope with the hated foreigner. Is it surprising that the reaction should have hastened free Protestantism along the road toward intolerant Puritanism?

All this may seem to have but a slight bearing on John Wheelwright. On the other hand, it would be as impossible to appreciate and understand Henry Ford without some slight knowledge of the development of steam, electricity, social economics, and finance during the last seventy-five years, as to understand the Puritan settlers of

New England without painting the background of the sixteenth century. In 1600, Wheelwright was about eight years old. In other words, the product of the hereditary forces of the sixteenth century was beginning to react to the contemporary forces among which he lived. Their effects upon him must be studied as they become apparent.

CHAPTER II

OLD ENGLAND

OF John Wheelwright's early years it is impossible to cite any of those surprising performances and precocious sayings so dear to biographers as being the prophetic indices of glories and characteristics to come. In fact, beyond a surmise that he was born in 1592, of well to-do people, we know nothing of him before his graduation from college in 1614. From the fact that his father, Robert, who lived in Alford in Lincolnshire, and died in 1612, was rated as a prosperous yeoman, we can assume that the son, John, was intelligent and ambitious, since, otherwise, he might have been expected to follow in the paternal footsteps rather than to go to the University at Cambridge. Even the date of his birth is not certain; if 1592 is correct, he must have received his degree at twenty-two, which, for those days, was somewhat above the average age of graduation. Hence it is quite possible that 1594 was the year of his birth. Of his parents little is known, except that they belonged to the great middle class and were well-respected folk. It has been claimed that his mother was a Marbury. If she were, Wheelwright would have been a connection of John Dryden, as well as a relation of

Anne Hutchinson, whose brother-in-law he subsequently became, since she was the daughter of Francis Marbury.

Information concerning John Wheelwright's college years is almost as scant; little is known except that he was given a degree of A.B. by Sydney-Sussex College, Cambridge, in 1614, and that of A.M. in 1618. Oliver Cromwell and he were undergraduates and friends at college, and one or two remarks attributed to Cromwell indicate that Wheelwright was robust and fond of sport. Cotton Mather in a letter to George Vaughan says that 'when Wheelwright was a young spark at the University, he was noted for a more than ordinary stroke at wrestling.' The same gentleman quotes Cromwell as saying that 'he could remember the time when he had been more afraid of meeting Wheelwright at football, than of meeting any army since in the field.' Perhaps it is only a variant of the same remark, but Cromwell is also quoted to the effect that 'the only man I was ever afraid of was big John Wheelwright on the football field.' Beyond the fact that he wrestled and played football, no information has come down concerning his undergraduate days, nor indeed of the years between 1614 and 1623, except the fact that at some time within that period he took orders, and that on November 8, 1621, he married Marie, the daughter of the Reverend Thomas Storre (variously spelled in early documents, but now written Storey). Wheelwright's father-in-law died early in 1623, leaving his vicarage without incumbent. This living, which was at Bilsby, a small town adjoining the rather large market town of Alford, Lincolnshire, belonged to Robert Welby, and to it, on April 2, 1623, he 'presented' the young clergyman.

Apparently Wheelwright continued in this living for the next nine years, but on January 11, 1632, the official records of both Lincoln and London show that he was succeeded by one Philip de la Mott, of whom no more is heard. This transfer is not entirely free of a taint of impropriety, for it seems that the living escheated to the crown '*per pravitatem simoniae*.' In other words, the intimation is that in return for some payment or other consideration, Wheelwright had agreed with Welby, to whom the benefice belonged, to resign from his living, thus allowing the owner to dispose of it to a new incumbent on more favorable terms. Somehow the arrangement was discovered, set aside, and the benefice escheated.

Inasmuch as church livings were in those days regarded as a definite form of property and freely salable, just as until comparatively recently army and navy commissions were bought and sold, it is difficult to see wherein lay the impropriety of the transaction. However, that some impropriety must have existed seems indicated, since the owner was penalized by the loss of his benefice. The blame for whatever irregularity there may have been seems to have fallen exclusively on Welby, for, even in subsequent years, none of Wheelwright's enemies — and they were many and bitter — held it against him. In fact, Cotton Mather says that 'his worst enemies never looked on him as chargeable with the least ill-practices; he was a gentleman of the most unspotted morals imaginable; a man of most unblemished reputation.'

After leaving Bilsby, Wheelwright is said to have lived for a time at Anderby and also at Laceby, both in Lincolnshire. There are records of the death of a son, William, in 1627 and of the baptism of a daughter, Catharine, in 1628. It seems that his first wife, Marie Storre, must have died between 1628 and 1630, for in the latter year he remarried. His second wife was Mary Hutchinson, sister-in-law of the famous Anne who caused such tribulation to the inhabitants of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, and with whose affairs Wheelwright later became much involved. Their daughter, who was probably their first child, was named Mary, and was baptized and died in 1632.

It was at just about this time that Wheelwright was 'silenced,' as the expression went. This meant that he was forbidden to preach in any church, and, presumably, to address any public gathering on matters of religion. To a man of his temperament such a prohibition would be more of a spur than a deterrent, and it seems certain that much of his time was devoted to private teaching and preaching.

To understand Wheelwright's position, or that of other 'silenced' clergymen, such, for example, as John Cotton, his great friend, one must examine a little into the conditions of society and religion in England as they had developed during the reign of James I and during the first ten years when Charles I was on the throne. Following the great national development of the sixteenth century, briefly referred to before, had begun the growth, as an entity, of the huge middle class which was becoming and has always remained the bulk and the power of British thought and, physically, of the British Empire. The people of this new social stratum had been given a new thing — their own religion; just what to do with it they did not know; generally speaking, they were not a particularly intellectual or intelligent lot, but they were intensely jealous of their new possession, and, above all, they intended to be perfectly sure that it was to be as unlike the hated Catholicism as they could make it. Like all young enthusiasts they naturally went too far in the other direction. Since he was not over-versed in the finer points of religion, and had not studied the history and causes which underlay doctrines and forms, the middle-class Englishman objected most strenuously to the outward manifestations and to many particular tenets of Catholicism — such, for example, as church decorations and the theory of the infallibility of the Pope. Hence the Anglicans and later the Puritans, some of whom refused to recognize in the monarch the Head of the Church as smacking of Popery, began by reacting violently against, and doing away with images, ritual, religious pageants of all sorts, and all agencies which might be construed as intermediaries between the Divinity and man. In their daily lives they affected an exaggerated simplicity of dress and habits; festivities, diversions, and the amenities of life were branded as sinful. Macaulay says of them: 'The Puritans hated bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators.' In short, they almost carried out the words of a poet of later years in their attempt 'to merit Heaven by making life a Hell.' Every detail of their existence was based on the teaching of the Bible. To it they turned and on it only did they rely. This was the 'pure word.' But, inasmuch as the Bible is often ambiguous, inevitable discussions arose as to the proper interpretation of the written word.

The next step was an elaboration of a religious metaphysics, of a doctrinal hair-splitting, and of a series of dogmatic controversies which involved subtleties and refinements wholly incomprehensible to us to-day. It even seems doubtful whether the disputants themselves understood what they were arguing about. Indeed, some of the most bitterly contested points, such, for example, as the battle over the Covenant of Grace *vs.* the Covenant of Works, if we can make anything of it at all, seems to us painfully dull and utterly futile. Of this particular debate more will appear in due course, since on it John Wheelwright's later life largely turned.

The reign of James I — personally a most unregal figure, which fact was necessarily reflected in his immediate court surroundings — was a relatively peaceful period for England, in so far as international politics were concerned. Abroad, the colonization which had begun under Elizabeth continued, and lost more and more of its flavor of freebooting and of piratical conquest. It became more orderly and began to take on a more business-like appearance. At home, the nation was consolidating the progress, until now largely experimental, which the last half of the sixteenth century had produced. No serious political crises occurred. Business flourished, and this in turn meant that the middle class flourished and year by year acquired a greater power in national affairs. And, as the middle class grew, so did Puritanism — essentially a middle-class religion. Catholicism has always been, and probably will remain the faith of the aristocrat and of the lower classes. James I, and consequently his court, was *bourgeois*, not *grand seigneur*.

With the advent to the throne of Charles I in 1625 certain aspects of the picture, at least of that part which was occupied by the court and the government, changed. Charles, though neither a very forceful nor a very wise king, was royal to his finger-tips and to his last breath upon the scaffold.

> 'He nothing common did nor mean
> Upon that memorable scene,
>   But with his keener eye
>   The axe's edge did try;
> Nor called the gods with vulgar spite
> To vindicate his helpless right;
>   Then laid his comely head
>   Down, as upon a bed...'

His court was far more regal than had been that of James, and his wife, Henrietta Maria of France, was a Catholic. Naturally, many of her immediate attendants were of the same faith, and whether, as some have felt, Charles had leanings toward Rome, or whether he did not, a taint of Catholicism existed in the highest circles which, unfortunately, were the circles closest to the Head of the Church of England. A quarter of a century earlier, the Puritans — that is, generally speaking, the middle class — could have done nothing; in 1630 and thereabouts, they reacted more and more vigorously until, in 1649, the royal head fell upon the executioner's block, and with Cromwell at their head they took control.

But the growth of Puritanism was not free from growing pains and other youthful distempers. Rifts of varying magnitude appeared. There were radicals of all degrees from those who grumblingly but passively accepted the Church of England as then constituted, to Nonconformists, Separatists, Opinionists, Free-Thinkers, Covenanters, etc., *ad lib.* With increasing vigor there arose the cry for religious freedom. Various minorities clamored for the absolute right to worship and preach as they wished; the majority held strongly to the established conventions. It was the same old story of the radical underdog revolting under the slogan of freedom against the conservative powers in control. Such has been, and always will be the history of new movements. A radical minority rebels against the established order; if time proves the new theory correct, its propounders, after it has triumphed, are hailed as having been ahead of their times, as patriots, martyrs, noble pioneers, far-sighted thinkers. If the theory fails, they remain mere radical visionaries and rebels. And perhaps the most peculiar, yet universal trait of all these successful radical enterprises is that once in power, the cry for freedom is heard no more, and in its stead there resound the dictates of the most tyrannously conservative autocracy!

At approximately this time — 1630 — after he had retired from his living at Bilsby, Wheelwright first showed marked signs of that radicalism and nonconformity which were to be his outstanding characteristics and the controlling factors throughout his life. Exactly what happened between the period when he was a minister in good standing, his 'silencing,' and the subsequent years of private or bootleg preaching, extending until his final determination to emigrate to New England, are matters of conjecture. This much only is known.

In 1612, John Cotton, who had been head lecturer, dean, and catechist at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, was appointed to the vicarate of Saint Botolph's in Old Boston. In course of time he acquired a high reputation as a preacher. As the years went on, bringing with them political, religious, and social changes, it became increasingly clear to his parishioners that certain radical and nonconformist tendencies were at work. By 1618 or 1620, Cotton had begun to simplify the service. He wore no surplice, used no cross at baptism, and his preaching laid greater stress on the value of direct spiritual revelations, or, as it was then called, on the 'clear ministry.' These innovations quite naturally met with opposition, and in 1632 the Court of High Commission took cognizance of the matter, and Cotton was obliged to leave England.

Throughout these years Wheelwright had been an intimate friend and sympathizer of Cotton's; he preached the same doctrines, used the same form of service — and met substantially the same fate at the hands of the clerical authorities. It is interesting to note in passing that in 1633 Archbishop Laud — whose father had been a clothier — became the administrative head of the Church of England. Although he was clearly a member of the middle class, and at the same time the head of the new and 'free' religion which so eschewed the autocratic methods of Rome, he was so intolerant in his treatment of the whole question of nonconformity, and especially of nonconformist preaching, that in that year he silenced, removed, or banished several hundred ministers. It was these policies which prompted Milton, who was about to enter the ministry, to abandon his plan and to write: 'Perceiving what tyranny had invaded the church, that he who would take orders must subscribe, slave, and take an oath withal, which unless he took with a conscience that would stretch, he must either straight perjure or split his faith, I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing.'

Archbishop Laud and his Court of High Commission! What a different point of view a seat on the Government Benches gives!

Coincident with his association with Cotton — and presumably with others of the more radical clergy — began Wheelwright's connection with the Hutchinsons. Anne, obviously somewhat of a fire-brand and a disturbing influence in any community, was one of Cotton's warmest supporters. Naturally she and Wheelwright were friends, and this friendship was undoubtedly stimulated by his marriage to Mary, Anne's sister.

Did Wheelwright influence Anne Hutchinson or *vice versa*? How much did her dominant personality and her radical convictions have to do with his nonconformity? Obviously there was a connection between the two, and to that connection and to the connection with Cotton many of the vicissitudes of Wheelwright's later years must be attributed. The whole situation offers ample opportunity for speculation. In any event, the connection was a close one when he was silenced in about 1632.

CHAPTER III

NEW ENGLAND

It is hard to-day to appreciate the full meaning and importance which attached to a sentence silencing a clergyman in England during the first half of the seventeenth century. Naturally, recantation or passive acceptance of the edict was possible, and, in some few cases, this escape from the dilemma was probably the course followed. Practically, it was not a solution because of the nature of the men silenced. Except for an occasional evangelist of the order of Billy Sunday or revivalists of whom Sankey and Moody were typical, the militant preacher is, generally speaking, extinct. A few survivors are still to be found among the Negro pastors of our Southern States. Our clergy try to do good, to bring comfort to such of their parishioners as are troubled, but, with few exceptions, they are not overmuch concerned with details of ritual and dogma, and they are distinctly tolerant of those of their brother clergymen or laymen who happen to differ with them. The ministers of the Gospel of 1630 were far different, and so, for that matter, were their congregations. Religion was vastly more vital to people and occupied a much greater portion of their daily lives and thoughts. Heaven was a very real place and the flames of Hell were very hot and very near. A difference of doctrine broke up families, turned intimate friends into enemies, and caused children to be disowned. In this country the questions of slavery in 1860, of free silver in 1898, and of Prohibition in 1930 have produced mildly analogous situations. If religion was so all-important to the layman, it was inevitable that the ministers should be even more ardent. How then could one of these militant preachers accept an order to remain silent?

The alternatives which confronted Wheelwright, since obviously he would neither recant nor keep still, were to continue preaching, which sooner or later meant jail, or to emigrate. Holland was none too secure a refuge, and, furthermore, involved living among foreigners — generically looked upon with suspicion and dislike by the Englishman of that day. Remained New England, a new land said to contain great possibilities, settled by compatriots and by men of the same type and of the same religious persuasions. In fact, several of Wheelwright's friends had already emigrated. In or near New Boston were Cotton, the Hutchinsons, his in-laws, Storre, also a relative by marriage, and not a few others. Obviously the signpost at this crossroads of his life pointed to a removal to the Bay Colony.

An easy decision, as we see it to-day. But consider for a moment the New England of 1636 and Massachusetts of 1930; compare the good ship Griffin, which took weeks to cross the Atlantic, with our six-day liners. England was thoroughly civilized and thickly populated. The Bay Colony was a strip of clearings on the edge of virgin forests swarming not only with very real and hostile savages, but also with wild animals and with not a few imaginary monsters. The entire population of the Colony in 1633 was less than four thousand and reports had come back of devastating epidemics. The prospect was none too alluring. That Wheelwright decided first to expose his wife and young children to the perils of the long sea voyage — and the perils were by no means ephemeral — and then to build a new life for them in the wilderness, is additional proof of what religious convictions meant to the Englishman of the early seventeenth century. Or, if one looks at it from another angle, it throws an interesting light on the vigorous and uncompromising quality of his character. How many professional, college-bred New Yorkers would to-day sail in a leaky, unseaworthy Gloucester fisherman to an almost unknown river in Borneo, there to hack a clearing in the jungle in which to build a home for wife and children *for life*, and all on account of a minor point of religious opinion?

John Wheelwright went.

On May 26, 1636, he and his family sailed slowly up Boston Harbor. They were weary of the sea and they looked eagerly at the tiny community where they expected to make their home, and in which they saw the sure haven, not only from the buffetings of the Atlantic, but from the persecution of the religious autocracy of England. One wonders whether, had they been able to foresee the events of the next few years, the wife, especially, would not have begged her husband to return whence they came, and there make such peace with his opponents as would assure the family of a quiet existence during the remainder of their lives.

The Boston to which Wheelwright's in-laws and friends welcomed him was a straggling, irregular village built on a hilly peninsula which backed against the salt marshes which the river Charles and the sea-tide overflowed. The settlement was primitive, and, in terms of 1930, poverty-stricken to the point of destitution. John Coddington, the treasurer of the Colony, is supposed to have had the only brick house; all the others were board and log shacks with thatched roofs and mud-chinked walls; they had been built haphazard and faced this way and that, although what one might call the 'best residential district' was the section lying between the water-front, up what is now State

Street to the State House, and thence over the Common to Park Square.

Small as Boston was, it was nevertheless the metropolis of New England. Other towns existed, some indeed settled earlier, but they all looked to and were in a sense tributary to Boston. In the immediate vicinity were Dorchester, Newtowne (now Cambridge), Charlestown, Woolyston (now Quincy). To the south lay the group of Plymouth hamlets, and, much farther, in Connecticut, Hartford and Windsor. To the north came the little settlements of Salem, Beverly, and Ipswich, and, beyond, the Ferdinando Gorges colony near what is now Saco. New Hampshire consisted of Rye, Portsmouth, and Dover. Vermont and Rhode Island were still virgin wilderness.

Far to the south and somewhat older, Virginia exported tobacco, but, generally speaking, New England was agricultural and barely able to sustain itself by almost superhuman labor on starvation rations of fish, corn, game, and dairy products. New England climate has become proverbial, and with reason; it seems probable that it was even more severe in the seventeenth century! Indians were never far away, and it is no exaggeration that a musket was as much a part of the churchgoer's equipment as was a prayer-book. To the very edges of the small and hard-won clearings, with their stockades and blockhouses, grew the dark mass of the forest primeval, which, for all men knew, might stretch on unbroken to Far Cathay and even beyond.

But New England had been settled by the sturdy British middle class — than whom no people yet known is more profoundly order-loving and law-abiding. Hence a general court had already been established, a governor appointed, delegates elected, laws and ordinances a-plenty put into effect, and, which was above all to be expected in view of the cause of the settlement, churches founded.

The most striking characteristic of this young body politic was not its order, but that politics and religion were so fused and so interwoven that it can be said without exaggeration that the Church and the State were one, and that the Church was that one. Hence we find that the right to vote was granted only to members in good standing of some established church; that the Council of Ministers, which was a part of the General Court, not only sat with the court, but acted toward it in a well-nigh final advisory capacity, its function being now that of judge, now that of jury, while the General Court discharged the alternative duty. Furthermore, no newcomer was allowed to remain in the colony for more than three weeks without the written permission of *one* member of the Council or of *two* magistrates. In other words, it took two officials of the State to equal one clergyman.

It is hard for us, who have so divorced religion from the administration of politics, to conceive of a form of government where the right of citizenship, municipal and state affairs, and, in fact, every relation between one man and his neighbors, or between one man and the community, was wholly controlled by the ministers of the Gospel. The explanation lies in the fact that to these earnest, rather narrow-minded men and women religion was life. To them their every act was subject to divine or demoniacal influence. God was not a kindly spiritual guidance and inspiration; He was a very stern and austere person with absolute power of salvation and damnation, the which He meted out with a severity untouched by any tenderness, and without regard to human frailty. What people did, said, and thought they did at their peril. Divine miracles and revelations, as savoring of Popery, were not generally believed in. On the other hand, actual manifestations of the Devil's constant and ubiquitous activity were universally accepted. Witchcraft, evil spirits, demons, spells, and the like were given as implicit credence as were the phenomena of nature or the changing seasons.

With so many conflicting influences at work, it is exceedingly hard to pass intelligent and understanding judgment on these men and women, and on what they did. Only by re-creating the atmosphere in which they lived, and, as far as possible, by making one's self a part of their surroundings can one follow their mentalities and hence their acts.

CHAPTER IV

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

In the names of islands, streets, and hills, as well as in those of their descendants living to-day, there still survives at least a partial roster of the population of Boston of 1636. We find in the records constant mention of Hough, Blackstone, Bromfield, Needham, Boylston, Higginson, etc., but these men, except as fellow citizens, had no direct influence on Wheelwright. On the other hand, a few names do stand out, all of which either as friends or foes played important parts in the affairs of the nonconformist recently arrived from Old England. A brief survey of these personalities will not be amiss, both because the people were interesting in themselves, and also because some knowledge of their characters is essential to an understanding of what is generally known as the Antinomian Controversy which split the Bay Colony and shook its solidarity to the roots, and which, more than anything else, affected John Wheelwright's life in America.

John Winthrop, John Cotton, Henry Vane, John Wilson were the men. Anne Hutchinson was the woman, and by far the most important figure. Of the men it is difficult to gauge accurately the relative importance. One must not forget that although Massachusetts in its infant years was fundamentally a theocracy peopled by intensely religious persons, those same persons were still human, were actuated by motives thoroughly secular, and, like the leaders in any community, had private axes to grind. Furthermore, although the clergy may have had virtual control of the General Court, that same court was a political organization very much interested in the politics of the moment — which is frequently equivalent to saying, in the personal ambitions of its members.

Any one who wishes may find biographies, each devoted to one of these men, and necessarily overlapping the lives of the others. Hence no attempt will be made here to do more than call attention to those characteristics which directly affected the fortunes and misfortunes of Wheelwright.

Winthrop and Vane represented the political, and Wilson and Cotton the religious, elements in the controversy. Anne Hutchinson was the spark which set off the bombshell, and Wheelwright in many ways seems to have been used rather as a *casus belli* and somewhat as a scapegoat — a belligerent goat, to be sure, and one by no means willing to go forth into the wilderness without protest.

Winthrop was born in 1587, was educated at

Trinity College, Cambridge, and ultimately became a lawyer, being admitted to the Inner Temple in 1628. In 1629, the Company of London appointed him Governor to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, where he arrived in 1630. In present-day terms one would say that a syndicate interested in a colonial venture had sent out a lawyer to manage its affairs. Because of the political aspect of the enterprise he was termed Governor instead of General Manager. Because of the tenor of the times, and especially of the character of the settlers in the 'Colony,' he was perforce much interested in and thoroughly familiar with matters religious. Apparently Winthrop was an earnest, level-headed man, not too bigoted as men went in those days, and who had the affairs under his jurisdiction much at heart. Appointed Governor in 1629 in London, he was reëlected annually at Boston until 1635. From this one can fairly assume that he was both popular and efficient. Forty-three years old when he arrived, he was forty-eight when the trouble started. He was, therefore, a mature, even an elderly man with six years' experience of the Colony's inhabitants and affairs.

From the style of contemporary documents, including his own diary, it is not easy to be certain how vitally he was concerned in religious matters *per se*. To-day, we should undoubtedly consider him an extremely bigoted person, but, if we make allowance for the literary style of the day and measure him by the yardstick of his contemporaries, his religious fervor diminishes to the purely normal point of that of an intelligent man keenly interested in the most vital topic of the moment. That, when his personal pride and interest were impinged upon — as in his relations with Vane — he could successfully use religion both as a sword and as a buckler proves him to have been not only human, but a good politician. On the other hand, his treatment of Anne Hutchinson indicates that he was not a very staunch or loyal friend. Here again one should perhaps give Winthrop the benefit of the doubt. Obviously, Anne was an exceedingly difficult, not to say impossible person. Also, he may quite sincerely have broken with her because of religious convictions quite unrelated to political and personal considerations. Even the least religious people of 1636 would to us be incomprehensibly narrow-minded. Be that as it may, the fact remains that from intimate friends they became enemies. In view of his legal training, Winthrop's conduct of the trials of John Wheelwright and of Anne Hutchinson must be construed either as indicating a very inferior judicial capacity, or as the tactics of an excellent but somewhat unscrupulous trial lawyer intent on winning his case irrespective of methods.

The man of next importance in the Antinomian Controversy, assuming always that the matter was not exclusively religious, was young Sir Henry Vane. Sir Harry Vane, as he is more generally called, was born in 1612, the son of Sir Henry Vane, Senior, who, somewhat later, became Comptroller of the Household of Charles I. He was educated at the great public church school of Westminster, and then at Oxford. When he came up for his degree, he was required, in accordance with the regulations of the times, to take what was known as the 'Oath of Conformity.' This he flatly refused to do, which meant that this youthful undergraduate deliberately defied, not only the convention of his college and social associates, but also the powerful and autocratic head of the Church of England, Archbishop Laud. Vane's next move was to go to Geneva, the stronghold and headquarters of Calvinism. Here for a time he studied theological matters. Armed with a good store of Calvinistic doctrines, he returned to England and openly attacked and disputed with Laud, who promptly retaliated by threatening legal proceedings against the young rebel. However, it was one thing to prosecute and persecute nonconformist ministers of the middle class until they submitted, or were jailed, or managed to escape; it was quite another matter to ride rough-shod over the son of a Privy Councillor and

Comptroller of the King's Household. The difficulty was solved by securing the royal permission for young Vane to take a trip of inspection to the King's good Colony of Massachusetts Bay, and this he did, arriving in Boston late in 1635 or early in 1636.

Vane must have been a most attractive person. He was young — only twenty-three when he arrived — handsome, full of enthusiasm, a good deal of a mystic, and of a charming personality and address. Nor did his character lack the serious and dignified qualities necessary to command the respect of his Puritanical contemporaries. Two other factors contributed to the welcome he received. First, like most of the other members of the Colony, he was under a cloud because of religious matters, and, second, he was a member of the aristocracy. Regardless of how democratic the English may be in many ways, their love of Royalty, of the Nobility, and even of the Gentry is very strong. They love to look up to such persons as they have decided they should look up to. A few members of the upper classes had migrated to Massachusetts; very early we find mention of a few aristocratic and noble names, but by and large the Bay Colonists were middle class, and in Vane they quickly saw one of the 'Quality,' to whom they were accustomed, and to whom they liked to do honor. In a vague way they were idol worshipers without an idol. Unconsciously perhaps, they felt that the void was filled. Actually, Vane did not fill the need; consequently, within two years, although in the mean time he had held the highest honors which his fellow colonists could bestow, he was once again headed for England, and under a far blacker cloud than the one under which he had arrived.

John Wilson has left behind him no glamour and few admirers. He was dour, painfully earnest, narrow-minded, and, as far as one can judge at this distance, distinctly stupid. Not the most diligent and kindly examination can find in him a spark of sympathy, imagination, or humor. When attacked by sharper wits than his own, he fell back on bigotry and on an uncompromising Puritanism. Such power as he had he used unscrupulously and unfairly to down those of his antagonists who threatened his position, regardless of whether they happened to be women. Whether he was sincere in his religion may be questioned, but that he was sincere in seeking the downfall of those who did not agree with him cannot be disputed.

Remain of the immediate *dramatis personæ* John Cotton and Anne Hutchinson. As a preacher Cotton had made a great reputation in England, and it was largely due to his influence that the Hutchinsons had moved to Boston. Clearly he must have been a man of very marked personal charm. In all his dealings with the various factions in the Colony, he displayed great tact and great skill as mediator and moderator. He must have been of an essentially gentle nature, and he must have disliked controversies and rows. Indeed, one is tempted to feel that, in his efforts to avoid unpleasantness, he shifted his position too often and too easily to be a staunch friend or a reliable ally. Religious convictions may have been the reason for his breach with Anne Hutchinson; unfortunately, at that particular moment the ship of her affairs was clearly sinking, and his desertion was too timely not to be suspicious.

Anne Hutchinson, the real and underlying cause of most of the trouble, was a woman of such strong personality and her life was so eventful that a study restricted to her alone would be necessary to do her justice. In fact, two such biographies have recently been published, and to these excellent and thorough books the reader eager for more detailed information is referred. For present purposes it is sufficient to repeat that Mistress Hutchinson, the daughter of a more or less nonconformist minister, had been a parishioner and a great admirer of Cotton's in England and had finally followed him to Boston. Wheelwright she had also known well before coming to Massachusetts; this intimacy must have increased when he became her brother-in-law. Short of a detailed study, her most important characteristics can best be grasped from her share in the disturbances in which she took part.

Two years before Wheelwright and his family landed in New England, the Hutchinsons had arrived and settled in Boston. William, Anne's husband, a quiet, sound, but not over-forceful man, had quickly fitted himself into his new surroundings, had joined the church, taken part in local politics, made money, and had come to be regarded as a substantial citizen, even though dominated by his wife. She, in turn, had identified herself with the best element of the community and had distinguished herself by charitable, medical, and general welfare activities. It took but a very short time for Mistress Hutchinson to find herself the most prominent woman in Boston. She was, furthermore, universally liked and admired, not only for her good works, which were outstanding, but for her marked mentality and passionate interest in matters religious. Intellectually she was far above the majority of her fellow Bostonians.

As soon as Sir Harry Vane arrived, he very naturally came into intimate touch with the most prominent citizens, and especially with Winthrop, Cotton, Wilson, and Coddington, who were all officials or quasi-officials of the little theocracy about Beacon Hill. Inevitably he saw not a little of Mistress Hutchinson. She was at this time conducting weekly meetings at her house to which the women-folk repaired to discuss the sermons and teachings of the previous Sunday. From gatherings the purpose of which was general discussion it is certain that in a short time the meetings changed in character until very soon Mistress Hutchinson dominated them to a degree where she did the explaining and expounding and the other women did the listening.

For a time all went well and the weekly meetings of the women were looked upon as excellent and in all ways praiseworthy affairs. But a woman of Mistress Hutchinson's mentality, energy, and undeniable faculty for causing disturbances inevitably strove for a form of leadership, especially in religious matters, which conflicted with the conservatism of Winthrop and the dull-witted single-mindedness of Wilson. Little by little the women's meetings at which Anne held forth became tinged with a distinct element of criticism. She was becoming increasingly imbued with the theory of personal revelation, which was the Covenant of Grace, and which was, as it took more concrete shape, less in accord with Wilson's preaching. Cotton she still admired, although one is inclined to think that his fair-weather suit-every-one policies must have seemed thin porridge to as positive a person as was Anne Hutchinson.

At bottom, although driven out of England for nonconformity, John Cotton was very little of a nonconformer. He had nothing of the spirit of a leader or of a revolutionary.

Inevitably she and Vane liked and admired each other increasingly. Vane was ardent, constantly in search of something new, and with his mysticism and hostility to the stand-pat conformism which had driven him to America, was always trying to add a more spiritual element to his religion. She, in terms of her surroundings, was a religious radical; he was a religious experimenter, a tryer of new notions. The great difficulty was that both were tampering with the mainspring of their community's and co-citizens' works — religion with a double capital R.

People of Anne Hutchinson's and Vane's temperaments and mentalities are never willing to linger at the stage of discussion; they must act. It was not long before they began planning to do things. They were shrewd enough not to attempt arbitrarily to upset the existing order. This they realized they could not compass as yet. Hence their initial move was an effort to reform the ministry from within; in other words, they proposed to put a minister whose preaching suited them in a position of sufficient authority to leaven the whole. In casting about for the proper person, their eyes immediately fell on Mistress Hutchinson's brother-in-law, John Wheelwright, who had at the time been in Boston about a year and who was sufficiently prominent to serve their purpose. Not only that; he was a fighter-born. Here was their man, and now to action!

It was an evil day for all three of them when Anne Hutchinson and Harry Vane opened their campaign of what they termed reform, but which was in effect a deliberate attempt to impose their doctrines upon the community.

CHAPTER V

EXCURSIONS AND ALARUMS

As has been pointed out above, Winthrop, after several successive terms as Governor, had been defeated at the polls in 1636, and Vane, the charming young aristocrat, had been elected in his place. Unquestionably, after his years of efficient and faithful service, Winthrop must have resented being ousted by a mere boy. Furthermore, he had many friends who sympathized with him. Had no such feelings existed, it is quite probable that the Antinomian Controversy would have remained a point of theological discussion and nothing more. Gunpowder and sparks, independently, are harmless enough; even after the explosion it is difficult to say which was the more important factor. Anne Hutchinson's tenets, unmixed with politics, might easily have died a natural death, but, because of the political current, they assumed a major importance. So much so that on October 25, 1636, a solemn conclave of the religious authorities was called for the avowed purpose of considering and dealing with the incipient heresy. Very proper, indeed; but one cannot avoid noticing that this theological conclave was timed to coincide with the meeting of the civil powers in the form of the General Court.

There resulted what might be described as preliminary skirmishes between the outposts. Wheelwright and Cotton were summoned before the meeting and questioned at length on matters of doctrine. Of the details of the hearing nothing has come down to us beyond a bare statement of results. Both ministers were exonerated, and no further action was taken. It was a clever move, and Winthrop's party had scored, for, exonerate a man all you will, the fact remains that he has been under suspicion, and no coating of whitewash can wholly hide the taint. More than ever were Cotton and Wheelwright indentified with the Antinomians.

Vane's party made the next move. At the instigation of Mistress Hutchinson and of Vane, but apparently not in their names, it was proposed to join Wheelwright with Wilson as 'second teacher.' Very temperately but firmly the Legalists, through their leader Winthrop, made answer that there seemed no need of any additional minister in the church, and that, furthermore, Wheelwright had been accused of preaching unsound doctrines. This thrust was attenuated by Winthrop's diplomatic comments to the effect that *personally* he was perhaps in accord with Wheelwright's views, and that he thought most highly of his talents, but that since such an appointment was 'apt to raise doubtful disputations, he could not consent to choose him to that place.' What good did the coat of whitewash do? More than ever was Wheelwright marked as unorthodox; more than ever was suspicion thrown upon him; more clearly than ever was the line between Legalists and Antinomians, between Winthrop and Vane, defined. Once again the former had scored, and this time the skirmish had been in the open where the whole Colony could watch the outcome.

The move had failed; it did not in itself seem important. Results, however, proved that it had been not a mere skirmish but a major engagement, at least from a tactical standpoint. It appears probable that Winthrop saw this and that Vane did not. In any event, the matter was not allowed to rest, and before the winter was over, as a result of constant discussion, the entire population of Boston had more or less actively taken sides.

In the mean time, certain groups which had settled eight or nine miles south in what was called Mount Woolyston (subsequently Braintree, and now Quincy) found themselves in need of a minister. They asked for the appointment of Wheelwright, and their request was granted. Perhaps it was just as well that the bone of contention should be moved a little afield. Again the tactical and diplomatic superiority of Winthrop and of the older, conservative party became manifest.

Of Wheelwright's ministry at Mount Wollaston we know nothing, from which it may be inferred that he proved satisfactory to his congregation. Nor should it be thought that Wheelwright was in any sense *persona non grata* in Boston. Such was by no means the case. And this is additional evidence that the conflict usually called the Antinomian Controversy was fully as much political as it was theological, and that, regardless of the charges made against him, and of the treatment afforded him, Wheelwright was a pawn and not the capital piece in the game.

In January, 1637, either on the 16th or the 19th, a Solemn Fast Day was appointed and observed throughout the Colony. The reason appears to have been the occurrence of various calamities both locally and in England; a further reason given, and one which offers food for thought, was the increasingly serious dissensions between the churches — dissensions which the powers were not in the least anxious to see abated. On this solemn occasion Wheelwright was invited to preach the sermon in Boston.

Fortunately, the entire text of this sermon has been preserved, and from it we can gather valuable side-lights on Wheelwright's character. On the other hand, as a sermon, it is far from inspiring, and in printed form it can claim absolutely nothing as literature. It is the earnest exhortation, freely interlarded with Scriptural references in which neither chapter nor verse is omitted, of a good, fearless, and ardent clergyman. Wheelwright did his best to help his congregation by pointing out certain things which he deemed errors. Because of the far-reaching results which came thereof, this sermon has been the object of much study and discussion. The consensus of opinion appears to be that it contained nothing of an objectionable nature. Some scholars, on the other hand, and the scholars have for the most part been of the cloth, maintain that at the very least it tended to promote religious dissension and was, therefore, censurable. The kernel of the question seems to lie in whether certain expressions were to be accepted metaphorically or literally. If taken *à la lettre*, they most certainly smacked of revolution and sedition. One commentator disposes of the subject as follows: 'We think [the expressions] dealt with nothing more substantial than symbolic swords and figurative firebrands. And these, we apprehend, were then too common in every pulpit to suggest the idea of actual violence to the most vivid imagination. But the sermon was seized upon as a means of inflicting a blow upon a prominent representative of the obnoxious opinions.'

Any one wishing to study the subject in greater detail may consult the full text of Wheelwright's sermon, which is readily available.

The Legalists by no means intended to allow such an opportunity to slip through their hands. During the ensuing months constant discussion kept the subject alive and increased party feeling. On March 9th, the General Court assembled and sat jointly with an advisory council of clergymen gathered from all parts of the Colony. No sooner had the Court met than Wheelwright was summoned to appear, 'to satisfy the Court about some passages in his sermon, which seemed to be offensive.'

As one reads the records of the action of this composite of the judicial, legislative, and theological powers of the Bay Colony, it seems as though the Court was only a younger and enlarged edition of the famous and infamous Star Chamber and High Commission. Very clearly the judicial temperament was inadequately developed in the men of Massachusetts, and personal motives and eagerness to reach the desired end were paramount.

Wheelwright was first shown an alleged 'copy' of his sermon and asked to accept it. That he declined to do so forces one to the belief that the text was to a greater or lesser degree 'doctored.' One also wonders how and where this text was procured. Short-hand was unknown, and presumably Wheelwright had only made one or at most two copies for his personal use. Did the authorities steal a copy, or did they write one up which suited their purposes? As evidence of his good faith, and also of his intention to stand by what he had actually said, without the slightest recantation, he offered his own copy of the sermon. Apparently the Court did not like this move, and, in fact, was somewhat nonplused as to what to do. The hearing was consequently adjourned until further notice, and Wheelwright was remanded until a course of action should be determined upon.

At this point the defendant's partisans rallied to his support and a petition signed by more than forty influential members of the local church was presented to the Court. The subscribers made what to-day would appear the eminently reasonable and just request that future hearings before the Court should be public. It seems that had the Powers intended a fair trial the petition *must* have been granted. It was summarily refused. Subsequent proceedings were conducted behind closed doors, and, what is more, considerable trouble was later brought upon the signers of the petition because of their participation in the matter.

Contemporary, or almost contemporary, documents permit us to know somewhat of what went on at the trial. To Wheelwright's question as to whether he was considered innocent or guilty, answer was made that he was merely under suspicion. When he asked who his accusers were, he was informed that his sermon was his accuser, and that the Court was proceeding *ex officio*. Such action appeared to his friends so arbitrary that he was advised to refuse to answer any and all questions, and this he did with the result that he was again remanded.

Once more the members of the Court found themselves in a difficult predicament. They could not accept Wheelwright's refusal to answer their questions and drop the case. Their defeat would have been a complete rout with hopeless loss of prestige to all concerned. They dared not proceed autocratically to a summary conviction. The opposition was too strong and probable results too dangerous. Again they adjourned and consulted. The outcome was a compromise measure; the doors were thrown open and the public was admitted. The courtroom was packed.

The Court then proceeded to go into the Fast-Day sermon in detail, and Wheelwright was examined concerning the exact meaning he intended to convey by various passages. Again and again he was pressed to answer whether by the expression 'those under a covenant of works' he referred to the ministers; and each time he parried the question by saying that 'if he were shown any that walked in such a way as he had described to be a covenant of works, them did he mean.' The purport of the question was clearly to drag Wheelwright into an admission that he classed all who disagreed with him — hence the great body of the clergy — as heretics and as enemies of the Lord. Very properly he refused to make any such admission. The prosecution was getting nowhere.

As one looks at the matter to-day, there really was not much of a case against Wheelwright, and such as there was he had managed to defend pretty successfully. By all legal standards he was entitled to a 'not guilty,' but such an outcome would have been a serious blow to Winthrop and his party. As it was, the Legalists were in a bad way. Not only had Wheelwright made a good defense, but his general attitude had been such as to win considerable respect and admiration even from his enemies — except, of course, from the most bitter, many of whom, incidentally, had other motives and other axes to grind than merely getting rid of a dissenting clergyman. Furthermore, he had a considerable number of friends, among whom were some of the most influential men in the community, such as Coddington, Cotton, Aspinwall, and Coggeshall. The prosecution, therefore, decided to risk a rather desperate move. It closed its case as far as the offering of evidence was concerned and put the question to the clerical Court. In the light of modern legal procedure it is difficult to understand the curious mixture of judge and prosecuting attorney which the Court assumed. The Court, which was also the prosecution, was asked *by itself* to answer *its own* question propounded *by itself.* What chance had the accused! The question was thus framed: 'Whether, by that which you have heard concerning Master Wheelwright's sermon, and that which was witnessed concerning him, ye do conceive that the ministers in this country do walk in and teach, such a way of salvation and evidencing thereof as he describeth and accounteth to be a covenant of works?'

The very form of the question insults our judicial sense. The jury — if so it may be termed — was not asked whether the accused had or had not done or said something improper; it was asked whether certain *other people* had done something. In substance it was asked whether all the clergy were Covenanters of Grace and so guilty, or whether Wheelwright — one man — was guilty. In no sense was Wheelwright alone on trial. The move and the question were shrewdly devised, and it would be interesting to know who was responsible for them. On the other hand, the purpose and the form were so clear that whatever vestige of a trial remained was done away with. One wonders how Wheelwright's supporters could have allowed such a question to go to the Court;

the answer is, they could not help themselves; the jury was packed; the Court was prejudiced — in a word, the case was 'in the bag.'

The only semblance of legality about the whole thing was this: Wheelwright had admitted that 'if he were shown any that walked in such a way as he had described to be a covenant of works, them did he mean.' Hence, by indirection, if all the clergy were Covenanters of Works, he had attacked them. What of it? If the clergy were Covenanters of Grace, Wheelwright had merely accused them of being what they were, and no action lies for telling the truth; if they were not followers of that doctrine, he had not attacked them. The defense would seem final. We should consider that the case had ceased to be the trial of an individual and had become a vote as to the doctrinal attitude of the rank and file of the clergy. Not so in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay in the year of grace 1637. Far from it! And yet, even then, the procedure was such as to trouble the tough-skinned consciences of many members of that 'judicial' assembly.

Perhaps honestly, perhaps for appearances' sake, the Court decided to sleep upon the question, but the result was inevitable, and on the following day the ministers returned an affirmative answer 'in the very words of the question.' The only dissenting vote was that of John Cotton, and how could he have voted otherwise?

The next step — leap, would be a better word in view of the vast and varied and to us apparently insurmountable obstacles which lay in the path — was the verdict of the General Court. This took the form of a resolution that Wheelwright was 'guilty of sedition and contempt of the civil authority.' Why, pray, contempt of the *civil* authority? It nowhere appears that he had ever come into contact with the *civil* authorities.

Only one scrap of evidence has come down to us to attenuate the atrocious injustice of the sentence. The Court was very much divided. It should here perhaps be noted just how this Assembly was constituted. The Court consisted of Vane, the Governor; twelve magistrates; twelve ministers, and thirty-three deputies. Hence, there were a total of fifty-eight votes. Of these the Legalists controlled an immediate twelve — namely, the ministers; and Wheelwright could count on Vane and Coddington. Of the remaining forty-four votes, eighteen were required for conviction, but twenty-seven for an acquittal. Mathematically the odds were three to two against the accused; practically they were much heavier because of the types of men which made up the Court. Even so, the vote must have been very close, for Coddington wrote in a letter to his friend Ralph Fretwell that a majority of the magistrates and of the deputies were opposed to conviction, but that after two days of argument 'the priests got two of the magistrates on their side, and so got the major part of them.'

What expressive wording, and how indicative of what went on behind the scenes!

It would be interesting to know what forms of log-rolling and back-scratching were used, what inducements were offered, what threats made. One wonders whether cauldrons of hell-fire and vats of blazing brimstone were not held over the heads of the vacillating voters. Powerful arguments in 1637! Be that as it may have been, Wheelwright was convicted of sedition and was banished from Massachusetts. Remained only the formality of passing sentence. Winthrop and his friends had won a signal victory in a major engagement; in fact, the enemy was really crushed, although still able to fight a few rear-guard skirmishes.

Vane and some of the deputies who dissented from the verdict requested that they be recorded as not concurring. Incredible as it now seems, this request was denied. Flushed with their victory, the Legalists then moved that Wheelwright be forbidden to preach during the period before sentence would be imposed, namely, at the next general session of the General Court, some months later. Very wisely, but also rather surprisingly, the cooler heads saw how similar such action would be to the persecution of the Church of England from which they had fled, and they did not allow the motion to be passed. They rather sidestepped the issue by referring the matter to the Church of Boston, which contained the bulk of Wheelwright's friends.

The next move was the presenting, on March 9th, of a petition, signed by over sixty leading citizens, protesting in no uncertain terms, well supported by references to chapter and verse, against the injustice and ill-treatment which had been meted out to Wheelwright. The only result was that the petition was ignored, and that the signers were subsequently persecuted and 'punished' for the dishonor they had tried to cast upon their rulers.

The Legalists having marched against their enemies under the standards of religion and the banners of doctrine, and having won a mighty battle — somewhat regardless of means, to be sure — now discarded to a large extent their theological panoply and set to work in earnest to get full control of the political situation. They were confronted with this problem: their strength lay in the towns outside of Boston; Vane and his adherents, still smarting from their defeat, more or less completely controlled the metropolitan district. The picture was not unlike a present-day gubernatorial contest between Democrats and Republicans in New York State.

At the next meeting of the Legislature — May 17th — were to take place the elections of the colonial officers. The Winthrop men, now openly committed to the defeat of Vane and to the reëlection of Winthrop, changed the voting place — just how is not clear — from Boston to Newtowne (now Cambridge). To us the change seems of negligible importance, but in those days crossing the river Charles was sufficiently difficult to insure the absence of a considerable number of voters, most of whom would be Vane men. Their second move was a concerted drive to get to the polls as many as possible of the voters from the outlying districts. Politics and political tactics change surprisingly little with the years!

No sooner had the meeting convened than the two parties locked horns. Vane introduced a motion to read, before preceding to the election, a petition from the people of Boston, which was presumably in the nature of a protest against the Wheelwright trial. A near riot followed. Some idea of how high feeling ran may be gathered from the fact that John Wilson, the staid, dour, unimaginative clergyman, was so aroused that he climbed into the branches of an apple-tree and from this point of vantage delivered himself of a fiery speech, which has since been alluded to as the first stump speech ever made in this country. In time order was restored and it immediately became apparent that Vane and his friends were badly beaten. The petition in favor of Wheelwright was excluded without even a reading, and it was voted to proceed with the elections.

The outcome was inevitable. Not only were Vane and all his supporters then in office defeated by Winthrop and his adherents, but a particular slap was inflicted on Vane personally in the form of a resolution that 'no man should ever after be made governor before he had been one whole year in the country, at least.'

With the defeat of Vane, Wheelwright's case was hopelessly lost. It merely became a question of how soon sentence would be passed upon him. The matter was put over until the next meeting of the Court in August. In the mean time he was given to understand that if he would make some sort of satisfactory retraction his case would be dropped. This, as might be expected, he flatly refused to do, and, further, he threatened to take an appeal to the King. Bold and upright John Wheelwright may have been; tact and diplomacy were conspicuous by their complete absence.

This offer of clemency is of particular interest as indicating quite clearly that Wheelwright and his doctrines were not the real issue which had been fought about, but only a plausible pretext to cover political and personal animosities.

Pending further action by the authorities, Wheelwright returned to his pastorate at Mount Wollaston and there continued his ministry. Apparently his congregation was not overmuch disturbed by his doctrines, and he still had staunch supporters in Boston, as is indicated by the fact that in May, Vane, Coddington, and Cotton went to his church. Even so, these must have been bitter months for the fighting parson. Bad enough it is to suffer for what one believes to be the right; it is far worse to be sacrificed as a pawn in a game in which one's beliefs — right or wrong — are used as a pretext to further or thwart the personal and political ambitions of others. Worst of all is it to be the victim of an unfair tribunal.

From a material standpoint, too, Wheelwright's path was beset with many and serious problems. Banishment in 1637 was a far different matter from what it would be to-day, were such punishments still imposed. He was by no means a rich man, and one may fairly assume that he had sunk no small part of his fortune in the homestead he had purchased in Wollaston. This property, under the terms of the sentence which would inevitably be pronounced upon him, he must sell. Forced sales make poor bargains for sellers and he would presumably suffer a considerable loss. And after the sale, what? In all directions stretched the wilderness. There were, to be sure, a few settlements not impossible of access beyond the boundaries of the Colony, but in many of them it was obvious that a banished clergyman, who had been such a bone of contention in the metropolis, would hardly be *persona grata*. And once again the political considerations could not be overlooked. To welcome an outcast from Massachusetts was a slap at that Colony, and Massachusetts was the most powerful unit in the New England of that day.

But Wheelwright was not wholly without consolations in this hour of need. Messages soon came to him from the Rhode Island settlements urging him to go there. Why he did not do so is not clear. Such a course would have reduced by much the hardships which must devolve upon his wife and children should he attempt to found a wholly new settlement. Perhaps the treatment he had just received had somewhat embittered him, and had made him prefer to live in his own bailiwick rather than to put himself under the rulers of any community. Apparently, apprehension never played a part in his calculations or acts. He did not fear the hardships of the wilderness, but he had suffered sufficiently from the authorities chosen by his fellowmen to suspect them and to avoid associating himself with any group of which he was not one of the rulers. Hence he made up his mind to move in a general northerly and easterly direction into virgin country. We have no definite records that any of his Boston sympathizers agreed to join him, but subsequent happenings indicate that the plan must have been discussed and tentatively adopted by various men who realized that retribution for their support of Wheelwright must inevitably fall upon them soon.

And so the months dragged on until the August session of the General Court, at which time sentence was to be passed. Just why no action was taken is not clear, but the matter was put off until the November session.

Politically the only event which occurred at about this time was the departure of Sir Harry Vane, who sailed for England in August. This left the Winthrop party in complete control, but their victory was not without compensating drawbacks. The Antinomian Controversy, which had been such a convenient excuse for political activities, had grown to a point where it was quite out of hand. So serious a problem had it become that autocratic measures seemed of doubtful wisdom. An attempt was therefore made to smooth matters over, and to that end a general assembly of the elders of all the churches was called for August 31, 1637. It constituted the first Synod held in New England, and it was intended, by friendly discussion, to unite the various factions. Its meetings were open to the public, and were well attended. It sat for twenty-four days, and it accomplished exactly nothing. Some of these meetings Wheelwright participated in, but whether he spoke or not and how he was received, we do not know.

The Winthrop men, having for once tried gentle measures which had failed, and confident of their power, now decided to hew to the root and to clean up the situation once for all. Their first step was to revamp the Legislature, of which they were now in complete control. This they did by the hitherto unheard-of method of dissolving the existing body, then adjourned, and of calling a new election on November 2d. All of Wheelwright's friends in the Legislature, except Coddington, were summarily expelled on the grounds that they had signed the famous petition of March 9th in favor of Wheelwright. The Court then summoned Wheelwright, and after again giving him the chance to recant, which he again refused to consider, passed the following sentence upon him: 'Rev. John Wheelwright being formerly convicted of contempt and sedition, and now justifying himselfe and his former practise, being to the disturbance of the civill peace, hee is by the Court disfranchized and banished.'

The sentenced man then claimed an appeal to the King. The Court declined to admit either the appeal itself or his right to appeal, claiming final jurisdiction over all persons within the territory covered by the Colony Charter. Apparently the

Reverend John's back was up, for he declined to give surety for his peaceful departure in accordance with the sentence, and was turned over to the marshal. However, after sleeping on the matter he realized that he was beaten, and he submitted. He was given two weeks in which to leave the Colony, failing which he was to deliver himself up at the end of that time to Captain Israel Stoughton.

Winthrop and his friends must have drawn a deep sigh of relief, but they rested not on their laurels, but set out vigorously to consolidate their position by disposing of as many as possible of Wheelwright's adherents by disfranchisement, banishment, fines, or by minor penalties. Perhaps their outstandingly outrageous performance was the trial and banishment of Anne Hutchinson which occurred not long after.

In speaking of the actions of Winthrop and of his friends in dealing with Wheelwright's partisans who had signed the petition of March 9th, one commentator says:

> But there were others beside Wheelwright who had sinned, and some pretext had to be devised by which to reach them. The names of most of his friends were upon the petition that had been drawn up after his trial. It is true it was a proceeding with which the existing legislature was not concerned, since it had been presented to one of its predecessors; it is also true

that probably never, before or since, have men who have protested they have not drawn the sword rashly, but have come as humble suppliants to offer their cheeks to the smiters, been held to be public enemies. Such scruples, however, never hampered the theocracy. Their justice was trammelled neither by judges, by juries nor by laws; the petition was declared to be a seditious libel, and the petitioners were given their choice of disavowing their act and making humble submission or exile.

Thus ended Wheelwright's second clash with the authorities, and in each case he had come off badly. As one looks through the rather meager records which are available — nor must one forget that most of these were the work of his enemies — one cannot help wondering how much or how little the victim was to blame for his ill-fortune. That Wheelwright was a fine, upright, and wholly fearless man seems certain, but all men of that type do not constantly find themselves in trouble. It seems obvious, therefore, that it was these very qualities, but wholly untempered by any tact or consideration of even honorable compromise, which caused the difficulties. No one can deny that his trial, judged by modern standards, was grossly unfair. It seems probable that within limits Wheelwright was made a scapegoat; on the other hand, why was he singled out? Why did Cotton, who was tarred with much the same brush, manage to escape and to sail a safe and honored course through these difficult times? How did Coddington steer clear of trouble? The conclusion one is forced to reach is that Wheelwright suffered from *les défauts de ses qualités*. In a word, that he was stubborn, probably quick-tempered, and quite unwilling to regard existing conditions of *vis major* as elements to be considered in reaching an opinion or in following out a course of action. Reduced to simplest terms, he was a courageous but not very shrewd man, incapable of getting on with those in power over him. On the other hand, when contrasted with some of his contemporaries with whom he came into conflict, few, if any, appear to have been as single-minded and as free from any taint of personal or ulterior motives. In his virtues as in his defects he stands out as typical of the best of his times, nor does the ill-treatment he received, and which a cleverer man than he might have avoided, diminish his stature.

CHAPTER VI

EXETER

One of the most surprising things about the early settlers of New England, and especially of Massachusetts, was their ability to adapt themselves to new conditions and to cope with and master the climatic and the physical conditions of the country. Generally speaking, new settlements have been founded by hardy, adventurous men with some previous experience in battling against the difficulties of Nature and the hardships of the wilderness. The outposts of spreading civilization have usually been garrisoned by soldiers, sailors, hunters, and traders, and most colonies founded by people of more urban and peaceful backgrounds have ended in greater or lesser disaster. The Puritan settlements of New England seem to be an outstanding exception. The men and women who came over during the first twenty years were for the most part from the towns and cities of Old England. Some were farmers, but the majority belonged to the great middle-class urban population — artisans, merchants, clergymen, tradesmen, and persons of small independent means. They emanated from a country probably as thickly settled and as far advanced in civilization, that is, in the development of simple physical comfort, as any in the world of their day. The climate to which they were accustomed was mild and free from the violent extremes of heat and cold which then, even more than to-day, characterize New England weather. That these settlements should have survived, and should have grown and thriven, is not only remarkable, but is a lasting commentary on the hardihood, adaptability, ingenuity, and determination of our ancestors. Of this achievement more, perhaps, than of any other thing which they did, should we be enduringly proud.

As has been stated, Wheelwright declined the invitation to move to the relatively settled Rhode Island Colony. Perhaps this refusal was due to the nature of the settlement, which prided itself on its complete tolerance of personal religious preferences. Wheelwright may have been unorthodox in the eyes of the people of Massachusetts, but he was far from being a real religious radical. By and large, he agreed with the men who had banished him, and probably he looked with even greater disapproval upon Roger Williams and his friends and doctrines than did Wilson and Winthrop upon his own. No corroborative evidence of this surmise has as yet been discovered, but, in the absence of proof to the contrary, it seems a plausible explanation of why Wheelwright refused comparative civilization, and chose to expose his family and himself to the vicissitudes of founding a new settlement in the forbidding wilderness of New Hampshire. Nor should it be overlooked that, in addition to the physical hardships, serious mental hardships were also involved in this decision. The college-bred man was giving up his intellectual life. He was turning his back on books, on educated friends, on the mental intercourse with men of his own kind which had been such an important factor in his whole life.

The indications are that after he had finally submitted to his sentence he left the Colony within the time appointed. He is supposed to have made a trip of inspection with one John Clark. Clark had a ship of sorts, and presumably they started their journey sometime in November, sailing along the coast as far as Portsmouth (then called Strawberry-Bank), and thence going on foot into the interior as far as Exeter, at the falls of the river Squamscot, in what was generally known as the Pascataqua District. Wheelwright must have known something about the locality and that it had certain distinct advantages to recommend it. There was an ample supply of lumber, in close proximity to good grazing and farming land, and at the falls of the river the salmon fishing in its season was exceptionally prolific. The falls also assured water-power for grist-

and saw-mills. Because of these conditions several adventurous and progressive individuals had already settled there before Wheelwright arrived. Assuming that these prior settlers really existed, and certain remains of habitations bear out the contention, the statement that Wheelwright 'founded' Exeter is not strictly correct.

Records mention that this particular winter was exceptionally severe throughout the district beyond the Merrimac River. Winthrop says that from November 4th until March 5th the snow lay over three feet deep, 'the more north the deeper.' And Wheelwright himself says in his 'Mercurius Americanus' that 'it was marvellous that he got thither at that time... by reason of the deep snow in which he might have perished.' From as bold a man, and from one familiar with the country, such a statement indicates that conditions were very severe. Just how or where he passed the winter, we do not know. It seems probable that he lived with a pioneer named Edward Hilton, who had a house a few miles down the Squamscot River. In any event, by a deed dated April 3, 1638, Wehanownowit Sagamore conveyed to 'John Wheelwright, Samuel Hutchinson, Augustine Stor of Boston, Edward Colcord and Darby Field of Piscataquake and John Compton of Roxbury and Nicholas Needome of Mount Walliston' a considerable tract of land between the Merrimac and the 'Piscatoquake patents... and to goe into the Country north-west thirty miles.' It is interesting to note that the Indian grantor reserved the right to hunt and fish throughout the granted territory and also reserved certain rights to all 'broken' land.

Although the deed runs to various of Wheelwright's friends who subsequently joined him, there is no evidence that they accompanied him on his first winter trip. On the other hand, the fact that the land was taken in their names indicates that they had previously agreed to join the proposed settlement. Indeed, these original grantees were really in the nature of trustees, who held the property for the benefit of all the settlers as well as for the body politic. This is apparent from the fact that only part of the grant was allotted to the first arrivals, the balance being subsequently parceled out or sold to later settlers, and the proceeds presumably used for community purposes.

Wheelwright's share was '80 acers, one end butting upon the river Eastward, and the other end running into the majne, six score poole in Length.' He was also given some marsh land — 'to o^r pastor 8 acers 3 quarters bee it more or lesse.' The worthy pioneer-pastor can have wasted no time in building some sort of home for his family, for early in the spring of 1638 his wife, children, and mother-in-law, the widow Susanne Hutchinson, joined him, and other families soon arrived in the new settlement.

As was to be expected in such a community, almost the first step was to build a place of worship and to organize the people into a church body. This appears to have been completed during the summer of 1638, for in December, 1638, or January, 1639, the church of Boston 'dismissioned unto ye Church of Christ at ye falls of Paschataqua, if they be rightly gathered and ordered,' John Wheelwright and eight others.

Whether such action by the clerical authorities was compulsory is not clear. It is difficult to see how, having banished and disfranchised Wheelwright, they could still maintain any hold over him, or consider him a member of the organization which had thrown him out. Wheelwright and his friends, however, seem to have thought that some such relationship existed, for they made formal application for 'dismission.' Massachusetts did not like this. The animosity against Wheelwright was increased by the loss of a good number of citizens who had voluntarily thrown in their lot with his in addition to those who had been driven from the Colony. Hence, in September, 1638, the General Court instructed the Governor to serve notice on the people of the Pascataqua District that Massachusetts regarded their welcome of the banished Wheelwright and of his friends as an unfriendly act.

The only effect of this bit of spite and uncalled-for animosity was to draw from Wheelwright a notice to Massachusetts that his new settlement intended to buy from the Indians a piece of ground which the Bay colonists had been anxious to acquire. This land included what subsequently became the township of Hampton. An exchange of letters followed, together with much examination of deeds and patents, and a good deal of argument as to who had been first in possession. No one seems to have got very far or proved very much, and Massachusetts finally took physical possession, which ended the matter. The only result was increased bitterness on both sides.

The new community grew and soon found that in addition to an organized church it required an organized government. It would seem as though some of the newcomers were not the kind who lived with their neighbors in full brotherly love! Furthermore, the orderly-minded Puritans felt the need of regulations which would promote the welfare of the community as a whole, as differing from the personal interests of the individual inhabitants.

In the spring of 1639, Wheelwright, with the assistance of some of his co-settlers, undertook to frame a sort of constitution. The resulting document, which was called a 'combination for self-government,' more nearly resembled the by-laws of a club than a governmental constitution and legislation. The signers, who numbered thirty-five, agreed to live under certain conditions, but just what was the status of any inhabitant who did not see fit to subscribe is not very clear. The regulations were binding on those who accepted them, but, apparently, were not binding upon the community as such.

Generally speaking, the combination produced a republican form of government. It dealt with the methods of choosing the authorities, with forms of taxation the proceeds of which would defray the expenses of government and would provide civic improvements such as highways. Attention was paid to the relations which were to obtain between the settlers and their Indian neighbors, and it was especially provided that neither gunpowder, weapons, nor liquor should be sold to the red men. Particular rules were laid down as to the treatment of forest and pasture lands. 'One discreet person was to have license to sell wine and strong waters to the English by retail,' although it is by no means clear just where these spirits — which do not appear to have referred to home-brew — came from. The enforcement of these provisions was entrusted to certain tribunals, and trial by jury was instituted.

The individual regulations are not as interesting to us as is the general tenor of the whole. The hand of the educated man, and likewise of the clergyman, is clearly discernible, and there is little doubt that Wheelwright was largely, if not wholly, responsible for the document. If some of the frontier towns, which later sprang up as our country pushed westwards until its march ended in the mining camps of California, had had any equivalent written legislation or constitutions, a comparison with that of Exeter would be most interesting. These later settlements, composed as they were of ignorant, violent men, apparently limited their legislative activities to protecting persons and property against aggression by 'bad men.' Any regulations dealing with the treatment of Indians — and such regulations were few — were designed, not to protect the natives, but to see to it that the Indian should not become a menace to the whites. Property rights were considered only as between individuals, not as between individuals and the community. Little, if any, attention was given to the improvement or future of the town itself. Justice (?) and punishment were left largely to the sheriff and his posse, who took a hand only when individuals had reached a state of disagreement which became a general threat to others. In a word, people were free, and could do just about what they damnwell pleased, as long as they did not step too hard on the next man's toes. Such a point of view is vastly different from that of the legislators of Exeter. It is probably quite true that Wheelwright did not have to deal with the same type of turbulent citizen, but it is equally true that his concept of community legislation was farther-sighted and more advanced.

And so the new settlement of Exeter grew and prospered in its humble and hard-working way. It must have been largely self-contained and self-supporting, for one cannot see how the settlers could have produced much to barter with the immediately outside world — even had that outside world had much to offer in exchange. Life was hard and monotonous, and the days were occupied with dragging the necessities of life from a not over-fertile soil and from an unwilling wilderness. The houses were mere log cabins, and poverty was general — a poverty which to-day we should call abject. Even some forty years later it is recorded that the richest man in one of these outlying settlements died leaving an estate of only ten pounds, an outstanding item of which was six silver spoons. Of what one might call industries, there were none; the grist- and saw-mills, which were driven by the river, supplied only local needs; the salmon fishery was a purely seasonal affair; farming and such incidental cattle- and sheep-raising as was carried on produced only the bare necessities of coarse food and coarse clothing. Amusements of any sort were conspicuous by their absence, partly, of course, because they were frowned upon by the austere Puritans, but also because — even had any been available, which, obviously, they were not — there was no time for them in the daily grind.

Nevertheless, the little community, under the spiritual and practical leadership of Wheelwright, grew until, in 1641, it had reached a point where it supported two political parties. The political status of the various Pascataqua settlements, which really constituted New Hampshire, was very dubious. The original patentee of the whole territory had been one John Mason, who had died in 1635, and his heirs had done nothing toward consolidating the patents which he left. Massachusetts was rather greedily looking at some of this doubtful territory, and in those days Massachusetts was a mighty giant and bore somewhat the same relation of power to New Hampshire as the United States of to-day does to Mexico. Certain elements of New Hampshire, dissatisfied with their loose-ended situation, were anxious to put themselves under the protection of, and become a part of their better-organized and more powerful neighbor. Indeed, as early as 1639 the settlement of Dover had applied to, and had been received into the Massachusetts fold. In the same year Exeter had also applied, but had subsequently withdrawn its application.

This tentative application, assuming that it was ever really made, is a most peculiar episode, and one which opens a wide field for speculation. In 1639, as far as one knows, Wheelwright was the dominating personality in Exeter. Many of the other citizens were his intimate friends and sympathizers. He was banished and disfranchised in Massachusetts; some of his associates were in the same situation, and many more were *personæ non gratæ* in the Bay Colony because of their partisanship with Wheelwright. Nothing could have suited these folk less than to come again under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts. Who then constituted the party which made application for absorption? Three answers are possible. Perhaps no application was ever made, and the records are merely wrong. Again, the Massachusetts authorities, out of spite or for other personal or political reasons, may have circulated the rumor. Or, as a result of some internal dissension among the inhabitants of Exeter, of which no record has come down, some party of malcontents may, in the heat of anger, have made application, and Wheelwright and his friends may have persuaded them to withdraw it. If the last alternative was what really occurred, one can imagine what heavy days the worthy pastor must have passed as he watched the possible disintegration of his new home, and faced the necessity of once again going forth into the wilderness — an outcast without a place to lay his head.

However, nothing came of the matter, and not until well into 1641 was the question of whether to ask Massachusetts to assume jurisdiction over Exeter agitated. But the situation was by no means clear, and it was on it that the two political parties above referred to split. The party seeking union pointed out, and with much justice, that it was by no means certain that the whole district was not already under Massachusetts' jurisdiction. In support of their contention they pointed out that at the time of the dispute over the Hampton land, the controversy had ended in Massachusetts claiming that, by right of her original charter, the Bay Colony's domain included all of the Exeter country. If Massachusetts really wanted the territory, they maintained, the infant settlements could not possibly defend themselves. Would they not obtain far better terms, and was it not wiser, to apply for citizenship, rather than to be taken over? Obviously the fighting pastor, of whom Cromwell had been so afraid on the football field, saw matters in a different light, and proposed to stand by his guns and fight it out.

The subject continued to gain importance, and it soon became evident that those favoring absorption were gaining the upper hand. At some date later in 1641 a petition was drafted and submitted to the General Court of Massachusetts. So mutilated is this document that we are almost wholly ignorant of its contents, and merely know that it was signed by thirteen individuals of whom all but two had been signatories of the original 'combination,' which had established the government of Exeter. John Wheelwright had failed to hold control of his new settlement. However, this defection, if so it may be called, was not wholehearted. Even those men who wished for union with the Bay Colony, did not wish it on any terms which Massachusetts might see fit to offer. There still remained in the minds of many a vivid recollection of the treatment they had received, and they mistrusted their powerful southern neighbor. For this reason the petition which they signed strove to set up various safeguards in the nature of reservations. It would be interesting to know just what these conditions were; unfortunately they are lost to us. It would not be rash to guess that one or more dealt with a pardon for Wheelwright and for such of his friends as were under ban. In any event, the petition seems to have lain dormant for almost two years, and when Massachusetts finally refused it, she based her refusal on other grounds. The General Court chose to stand on matters of territorial rights, rather than to reject the request on personal and individual considerations, 'taking it ill that Exeter, which fell within their patent, should Capitulate with them.' Apparently the word 'Capitulate' meant to negotiate, rather than to surrender at discretion, as we understand it.

As pointed out, the original petition was filed in 1641, but no action took place until two years later, when it was formally rejected by Massachusetts. Exactly what went on during this period between 1641 and 1643 is not clear, but from subsequent events it is obvious that Wheelwright was losing ground and influence. He must have realized how matters were tending, for we find that as early as September, 1641, he, Samuel Hutchinson, and Nicholas Needham were already casting about for a new place of abode.

Again Wheelwright could probably have gone to Rhode Island, there to live in relative comfort, for it seems unlikely that his former refusal of the proffered hospitality should have been taken amiss to the point where he was no longer welcome. We do not even know whether he considered this course. We do know that, quite characteristically, he cast his eyes in the other direction, and prospected the country farther north, which was then part of that most interesting grant, originally made to Sir Ferdinando Gorges, known as the

Province of Mayne, and then being administered in a rather casual way by Thomas Gorges.

The country which appealed to him was the district which later became the township of Wells, and to this territory Hutchinson, Needham, and Wheelwright acquired a form of title on September 24, 1641. Their title was merely a license to occupy and improve, since, as the land was claimed by several parties, Gorges did not care to incur the liability attached to granting a deed in fee.

At some period between 1641 and 1643 various of the non-unionists of Exeter, including Edmund Littlefield and Edward Rishworth, moved to their new settlement and set about the preliminaries of building and breaking and clearing ground. Meanwhile, Exeter was becoming increasingly anxious to come within the Massachusetts fold. No action had yet been taken by the Bay Colony on their petition of 1641, and, although the records are silent on the point, it is probable that some of its sponsors agitated the matter. In any case, it was at this time that the reply was forthcoming from the General Court to the effect that it did not care to have Exeter 'capitulate.' That the temper of the settlement had changed, and that Wheelwright's influence had sunk to a very low ebb, is proved by the fact that, immediately upon receipt of the Bay Colony's answer, a new petition was drawn up and forwarded to Boston. This second petition evidently contained no obnoxious reservations, and was signed by twenty-two men as compared with the original thirteen. It was promptly granted, and Exeter became a part of Massachusetts. Wheelwright once again found himself under the jurisdiction of his enemies and subject to his sentence of banishment and disfranchisement. It behooved him to move.

Experience *docet*, and this time he was not without a place to lay his head; this time he had exercised a reasonable amount of foresight and had provided himself with a harbor of refuge to which he could betake him when the storm broke. He did not wait for the authority of Massachusetts to become effective in Exeter, and moved to Wells sometime in the spring of 1643. In addition to his joint interest with Hutchinson and Needham in the license to occupy and improve the land obtained earlier, he acquired actual title from Thomas Gorges to a tract of land of about four hundred acres on the easterly side of the Ogunquit River. The deed is dated July 14, 1643, and was confirmed at Saco by Richard Vines, the Deputy Governor, August 14, 1644.

As one considers this last change in Wheelwright's fortunes, one is obliged once more to wonder how much he was the toy of an unlucky fate, and how much he was himself responsible for his misfortunes. Necessarily it is guesswork; generally speaking, there are no records of the years at Exeter, except a few more or less formal documents. Neither Wheelwright nor any of his associates seem to have kept anything like journals, nor, as far as we know, did they make notes or write many letters. They were too busy surviving and fighting Nature for a livelihood; furthermore, there was not much of which to write. And yet many things must have happened to change a situation from one of which Wheelwright was the outstanding leader, and of which he was in complete control, to one in which his fellow townsfolk followed a course of action which was equivalent to banishing their pastor and erstwhile first citizen. One is forced to the conclusion that, although John Wheelwright may have been a gallant leader of dissatisfied minorities moving into new countries, he was not a good administrator. He could not hold his followers. He was an unsuccessful executive. In his previous misfortunes he had not been able to get on with his superiors in authority; this time he had not got on with his inferiors, nor had he been able to handle a situation of which he was in control.

CHAPTER VII

WELLS — RECONCILIATION OR SURRENDER?

THE next four years Wheelwright spent at his new parish of Wells, and they were perhaps the most peaceful period of his life in New England. In fact, not only did he find himself drawn into no disturbing situations, but it was during these years that he made his peace with his enemies of Massachusetts. This new home must have been in many ways the least desirable abode he had yet taken up. Wells may have been somewhat less primitive than Exeter, yet it lacked many of the features which made the latter place not only bearable but pleasant. At Exeter he had had about him a number of his former friends and associates, who had been men of at least approximately the same mentality as his own. The population of Wells was composed, as far as one can ascertain, of very inferior, if not actually degraded, individuals — practically white-trash. At Exeter he had been the constructive leader of an enterprise, and the difficulties attaching to the settlement and organization of a new township must have contained a stimulus which went far toward counteracting the drawbacks of the infant community. This stimulus was entirely lacking at Wells, which was a more or less settled entity. Undoubtedly, there were many opportunities for improvement, but there was no chance for creation *ex nihilo.*

The natural result of such a condition is an almost complete dearth of records. We know that Wheelwright built a saw-mill; we know that a new church composed largely of the people who had followed him from Exeter was established of which he became pastor; and we infer from the lack of evidence to the contrary that he was acceptable to his parish, and lived at peace with his congregation and with his neighbors.

In view of Wheelwright's subsequent dealings with the Massachusetts authorities, it is not a bad guess that he regarded his move to Wells as only temporary, and that he intended to return to Exeter as soon as conditions permitted. Of this one cannot be certain, as two other hypotheses seem equally plausible. It may be that with increasing years — he was now fifty-one — his militant nature was becoming mollified, and he may even have changed certain of his opinions to the point where he admitted his former attitude to have been wrong. Again, it is quite possible that life in his new surroundings was so distasteful that he was willing to go some distance toward a compromise which would make it possible for him to return to the conditions which he liked, but which the heat of his younger convictions had obliged him to leave. One may choose whichever hypothesis best fits one's conception of the man, yet such contradictions can be explained by the sobering effect of growing age and by the inherent right of mortals to change their opinions.

Whatever the reason, as early as September, 1642, some one — we do not know who nor at whose instigation he or they acted — approached the Massachusetts authorities and sounded them out on the possibility of raising the ban and of allowing Wheelwright to enter and even to live in the Bay Colony. In the Massachusetts Colonial Records there appears the bare statement that if 'hee himselfe petition the C^{t} at Boston, they shall have power to grant him safe conduct.' No evidence has been found that Wheelwright took any steps about his case, but it is clear that some of his friends were active, for, without solicitation on his part, on May 10, 1643, the General Court of Massachusetts gave him permission to visit the Colony for two weeks at any time during the next three months. A contemporaneous chronicler states that Wheelwright accepted this safe-conduct, and while at Boston 'spake with divers of the ministers who were so well satisfied with his exposition of his feelings and views that they determined to use their influence to obtain a reversal of the sentence against him.' After this conference Wheelwright returned to Wells, and shortly thereafter wrote two letters, one to the General Court and the other to Governor Winthrop.

These letters are so surprisingly unlike the Wheelwright who had defied the English clerical authorities and subsequently not only the clerical, but the political powers of Massachusetts, that they leave one quite at sea for an explanation. Were there any tangible grounds on which to base the suspicion, one would be tempted to doubt their authenticity, which, however, seems never to have been questioned.

In April, Wheelwright wrote to the General Court as follows:

Right Worshipful, — Upon the long and mature consideration of things, I perceive that the main difference between yourselves and some of the reverend elders and me in point of justification and the evidencing thereof, is not of that nature and consequence as was then presented to me in the false glass of satan's temptations and mine own distempered passions, which makes me unfeignedly sorry that I had such an hand in those sharp and vehement contentions raised there abouts to the great disturbance of the churches of Christ. It is the grief of my soul that I used such vehement, censorious speeches in the application of my sermon, or in any other writing, whereby I reflected any dishonor upon your worships, the reverend elders, or any of contrary judgment to myself. It repents me that I did so much adhere to persons of corrupt judgment to the countenancing of them in any of their errors or evil practices, though I intended no such thing; and that in the synod I used such unsafe and obscure expressions, falling from me as a man dazzled with the buffetings of satan, and that I did appeal from misapprehension of things. I confess that herein I have done very sinfully, and do humbly crave pardon of this honored state. If it shall appear to me by scripture light that in any carriage, word, writing, or action, I have walked contrary to rule, I shall be ready, by the grace of God, to give satisfaction; thus hoping that you will pardon my boldness, I humbly take leave of your worship, committing you to the good providence of the Almighty, and ever remain your worship's in all service to be commanded in the lord.

In May he wrote to Governor Winthrop personally as follows:

Right Worshipful, — I have received the letter wherein you signify to me that you have imparted my letter to the honorable court, and that it finds good applause, for which I rejoice with much thankfulness. I am very thankful to your worship for the letter of safe conduct which I formerly received, as likewise for the late act of court granting me the same liberty in case I desire letters to that end. I should very willingly, upon letters received, express by word of mouth, openly in court, that which I did by writing, might I without offence explain my true intent and meaning more fully to this effect; that, notwithstanding my failings, for which I humbly crave pardon, yet I cannot with a good conscience condemn myself for such capital crimes, dangerous revelations, and gross errors, as have been charged upon me, the concurrence of which (as I take it) make up the very substance of the cause of all my sufferings. I do not see but in so mixt a cause I am bound to use, may it be permitted, my just defence so far as I apprehend myself to be innocent, as to make my confession where I am convinced of any delinquency; otherwise I shall seemingly and in appearance fall under guilt of many heinous offences, for which my conscience doth acquit me. If I seem to make suit to the honorable court for relaxation to be granted by an act of mercy upon my sole confession, I must offend my conscience; if by an act of justice upon mine apology and lawful defence, I fear lest I shall offend your worships. I leave all things to your wise and godly consideration, hoping that you will pardon my simplicity and plainness, which I am forced unto by the power of an over-ruling conscience. I rest your worship's in the Lord.

What is one to say of the really abject submission, recantation, apology — call it what one will — of the first of these two documents? How can it be reconciled with Wheelwright's attitude during his stay in Boston and during the years immediately following his banishment? Even if one makes due allowance for the somewhat exaggerated phraseology in use at the time, and even if one is willing to accept certain statements as only figurative, the letter is none the less a surrender at discretion, an almost ignominious wail of *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa* — especially when one considers what was the *quid pro quo*.

The second letter is almost as abject, and in ways perhaps more so, when one takes into account that it was addressed to Wheelwright's arch-enemy, Winthrop. The most kindly interpretation of which it is susceptible is that the banished clergyman, on thinking over what he had written to the General Court, felt that he had gone too far, and that he attempted to soothe his conscience and pride by writing a second letter, trying to explain and somewhat modify the first. Also, he may have seen that should the Legislature see fit to refuse his submission — although it seems probable that he considered the matter 'fixed' — his second letter would in a measure save his face. Had the texts of the two letters been reversed, one could ascribe the procedure to rather clever tactics. He would, to some extent, have preserved his dignity in the official letter by not bowing quite so low before his enemies, but, by the personal letter to Winthrop, he would have made it possible for the latter to explain to the Court that, although Wheelwright had not made quite as humble an apology as the Court might like, he, Winthrop, could, on the strength of a second letter written to him personally, assure the authorities of the sinner's complete submission. Such a scheme might not have been like Wheelwright; the course he did follow was even less like him.

It is, of course, fair to say that he might have had an honest and complete change of heart, and that perhaps he had come to recognize sincerely the error of his previous doctrines and actions. The trouble with that theory is that such reversals of opinions do not usually come overnight, and nothing in the relatively immediate past had given any evidence that a change of mind had been in progress.

The real answer to the problem will probably never be known. In one of only three places would the solution be likely to be found: In Wheelwright's own journal, and, as far as one knows, he kept none; in the journal of some contemporary with whom he had discussed the matter, and none such has been discovered; in a letter, and to date none has come to light. Therefore, it seems that people interested in the subject are quite justified, and in fact must interpret the evidence in such a way as to support whatever theory they prefer.

It was at about this time, namely, in October, 1643, that Anne Hutchinson, who had been banished from Massachusetts for her share in the Antinomian Controversy, and had ultimately settled at what is now Pelham Bay, near New York, was brutally massacred with all her family by a party of Indians. As typical of the man, and of his writing, this is how that worthy divine, Thomas Weld, speaks of the tragedy: 'Some write that the Indians did burn her to death with fire, her house and the rest named that belonged to her; but I am not able to affirm what kind of death slew her, but slain it seems she is according to all reports. I never heard that the Indians in those parts did ever before commit the like outrage upon any one family or families; and therefore God's hand is the more apparently seen herein, to pick this woful woman, to make her and those belonging to her an unheard of heavy example of their cruelty above others.' Weld obviously felt little sympathy with Anne Hutchinson, and, in fact, probably was rather pleased that the Lord should have so whole-heartedly endorsed his persecution and prosecution of the poor woman. To Wheelwright it was a different matter. She was his sister-in-law; she shared his faith; she was his friend and co-sufferer. Her tragic end must have been a severe blow to him, and, not only in a subconscious way, may have discouraged him and weakened the vitality of his resistance, but, in a practical way, may have brought home to him the advisability of removing his own family from the Indian-infested wilderness to within the protecting settlements of Boston, or, at least, of the relatively safer Massachusetts towns.

A further factor which made life less pleasant for Wheelwright at Wells and which must have affected his decision was that many of the Exeter Associates, who had come with him, had moved elsewhere. Wentworth went to Dover; Hutchinson and Needham appear to have returned to Boston (these may have been the 'friends at Court' who agitated the matter of the removal of the ban); Augustine Storre returned to England, and Rishworth moved to New York.

Whatever may have been the reason which underlay Wheelwright's submission to his former enemies, the result was that he was pardoned, and, in 1644, the sentence of banishment was lifted. On May 9, 1644, the Legislature resolved that 'Mr. Wheelwright (upon pticular, solemne and serious acknowledgm^t and confession by letter, of his evill carriages and of ye C^{r}ts justice upon him for them) hath his banishm^t taken of, and is received in as a member of the Commonwealth.' Once again he was free to enter and live in any part of the Bay Colony. This meant, among other things, that, if he wished, he could return to his Exeter parish in which he undoubtedly felt a parental interest. However, he never returned, although he does not appear to have sold the property which he there owned.

It was during the years at Wells, specifically in 1645, the year after he had been pardoned, that Wheelwright wrote the only document — other than the Fast-Day Sermon and incidental papers such as deeds, etc. — which has come down to us. Early in 1644 there appeared in Massachusetts a pamphlet which has generally been known as 'Weld's Short Story,' although its full title was 'A Short Story of the Rise, reign and ruin of the *Antinomians*, *Familists* and *Libertines* that infected the *Churches* of New England; And how they were confuted by the Assembly of Ministers there: As also of the Magistrates proceedings in Court against them. Together with Gods strange and remarkable judgments from Heaven of some of the chief fomenters of these Opinions; And the lamentable death of Ms. Hutchinson.' Authors of 1644 had not mastered the art of short and arresting titles! The article, written by his enemy Weld, was such a virulent attack that Wheelwright wrote 'Mercurius Americanus, Mr. Welds his Antitype, or Massachusetts great Apologie examined,' or, as it is usually called, the 'Mercurius Americanus,' as an answer to the 'Short Story' and in vindication of his own position. Both of these documents were published in London, although in Cambridge the printing establishment which has now become the Harvard University Press was already functioning. Perhaps the nature of the documents was too controversial to suit the managers of the Press.

Except for those who are interested in the doctrinal disputations of the Antinomian Controversy, and in the forms of argument and proof which the clergy of those days used, 'Mercurius Americanus' makes but dull reading. The same is true of the 'Short Story.' Both — and especially the latter — were so biased that one cannot even get good pictures of the individual men and women with whom they dealt, nor of the prevailing conditions at the time. However, both texts can be found in almost any large library, should any one wish to examine them.

The 'Mercurius Americanus' accentuates the incongruity of Wheelwright's letter to the Massachusetts authorities. In 1644 he abjectly apologizes and sweepingly admits his errors; in 1645 he publishes a vindication of his doctrinal views and teachings, and, although not as bitter as the 'Short Story,' in answer to which it was written, the answer is far from being a cry of *mea culpa*, and contains some keen retorts and many strong arguments. More than ever is it impossible to reconcile the two wholly contradictory documents. Both cannot be sincere; which is the honest expression of the attitude of John Wheelwright in 1644–45?

After the rather eventful period of the first years at Wells, the remainder of Wheelwright's stay — he remained at Wells until the spring of 1647 — was unmarked by any significant or interesting occurrences. He continued his duties of pastor under conditions which must have been rather distasteful, but evidently he gave satisfaction to his parishioners. Now that he was once again free to come and go at will, it seems probable that he adopted a waiting attitude until some opportunity which appealed to him should present itself. Perhaps the primitive conditions at Exeter did not seem as alluring as they had appeared when he was practically driven out. He wanted something better. It is quite natural that he did not care to return to Boston — even if he had had the chance, and of this we know nothing. Some friends would doubtless have welcomed him; on the other hand, some there were who would have called him traitor; some, coward; and to the majority he would stand in the light of a defeated man, even if these people did not stop to analyze too closely at what price he had bought his pardon. It was clearly better to stay where he was and to allow matters to blow over a bit. In the mean time, something might turn up; and it did, in the spring of 1647, when he was approached by the people of Hampton with the proposal that he become associated with their minister.

A quotation from Bourne, the historian of Wells, gives a rather vivid picture of the conditions in which Wheelwright had been living for the last four years, and presumably the same was equally true of his other wilderness parish of Exeter. Is it any wonder that he should have been willing to eat very humble pie to escape from them?

The people of Wells, up to about the year 1700, were poor — materially, intellectually and morally. Their houses were mostly of logs daubed with clay. They had few personal comforts or conveniences. Their beds were of the cat-tail rushes, which they gathered from the marsh. Knives and forks, teacups and saucers, silver spoons, chairs, carpets and looking-glasses were luxuries almost unknown. Their food was of the simplest. They had milk, but no tea nor coffee. Corn and such fish as they could catch were the chief of their diet. The house of the richest man in Wells is thus described: 'The kitchen is also the sitting room and parlor. Looking around, we discover a table, a pewter pot, a hanger (a hook on which to hang a pot), a little mortar, a dripping pan and a skillet. No crockery, nor glass ware. No knives, forks, nor spoons, not a chair to sit on. The house contains two other rooms, in each of which is a bed, a blanket and a chest.' This was the house of Edmond Littlefield, his wife, and six children between the ages of six and twenty.

It is probably true that man has suffered more in the interest of his religious convictions than for any other single motive. Even so, the flesh is weak, although the spirit may be willing. A creed is one thing; a difference of doctrine on a relatively minor point is quite another. Perhaps, in the watches of the night, John Wheelwright may have pondered the situation of the leader of the French Protestant party, who, on falling heir to the Catholic throne of France, which he could not ascend while he remained a Huguenot, accepted conversion with the cheerful remark, 'Paris vaut bien une messe!' That episode was not very old; it had occurred within a relatively few years. With such an illustrious example can one blame Wheelwright if he came to the conclusion that Boston was worth an apology?

CHAPTER VIII

HAMPTON AND HOME

As early as 1639 or 1640, Hampton had been settled by a company of Massachusetts people, and jurisdiction had been claimed by the Bay Colony. Whether any settlement, and if so how large a one, had existed prior to the controversy between Exeter and Massachusetts for control of Hampton, is not known. It will be remembered that Wheelwright had taken a leading part in the dispute, partly, without doubt, because he had liked the district, and partly as a retaliatory measure for the action of Massachusetts in serving notice on the people of Pascataqua that their welcome of Wheelwright was an act unfriendly to the Bay Colony. The outcome of the dispute was that Hampton became a part of Massachusetts, and, by degrees, more and more families from Boston and its vicinity moved thither. These were the kind of people Wheelwright liked, and were far superior to the white-trash which constituted the population of Wells, which was part of the Gorges Colony known as the Province of Mayne.

To understand this difference in the type of inhabitant, one must remember that the difference in the origins of Massachusetts and of Maine were fundamental. In 1607, the Plymouth Colony had sent out two colonies, one to Jamestown, and the other, under Popham, to Maine. The latter was short-lived, and ultimately passed into the control of Sir Ferdinando Gorges. It became known as New Somersetshire, and extended along the shore from the Piscataqua to Sagadahoc. The original settlers included many gentlemen adventurers, a number of younger sons of good families, and Robert Gorges, son of Sir Ferdinando, was the first governor *in loco*. He was succeeded by his cousins, Thomas and William. At various points along the coast settlements were established, and with almost each one some prominent English name became connected. At Kittery, Francis Champernowne, kin to Sir Walter Raleigh; at Blackpoint, Henry Jocelyn and Captain Thomas Camock, nephews of the Earl of Warwick; at Saco, Henry Boade of the Hampshire gentry; at Agamenticus, Edward Godfrey who bore the arms of Godfrey de Bouillon.

However, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, the real 'owner' of the Colony, regarded the enterprise purely as a money-making scheme, and the bulk of the early settlers whom he shipped over were pretty much riff-raff sent out as man-power to develop the grant and to return profits to the grantee. No concerted migration of earnest, religious, high-minded people such as settled in Massachusetts ever came to Maine to leaven the low-grade population. The result was a rather lawless and shiftless lot, who for many years continued the practice of slavery, and recognized no particular authority beyond the local ordinances established by necessity, and the arbitrary pleasure of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, the absentee ruler, and subsequently of his nephew and deputy, Sir Thomas Gorges, from whom Wheelwright and his friends acquired their land when they moved from Exeter to Wells. A slight semblance of an aristocratic society may have existed here and there in the immediate vicinity of the home of some scion (good, but more often bad) of the noble houses of England, but by and large the Province of Mayne bore much the same relation to the Bay Colony as might the communities in the mountains of West Virginia or Tennessee to the settlements along the James River in Virginia. The resulting situation has been well summarized as follows:

> The manner of life and the large proprietorship of Sir William Pepperell is an example of this [aristocratic] tendency. Two forces, the climate and the proximity of the Bay Puritans, worked against the development of an aristocratic society. The severity of the climate prevented the advantageous employment of many slaves; aided by the conditions of the climate and soil, the iron

hand of the Bay hierarchy slowly but surely moulded gentle and common into a community of almost uniform sentiment and action. The Puritanism of the Bay, with its subtle hostility to royal power, unconsciously levelled the people into a democracy.

Undoubtedly the advent and sojourn of Wheelwright and of his friends had greatly raised the tone of Wells. Even so, the contrast with Hampton must have been enormous. Hence, it is not at all surprising that when, in the spring of 1647, when he was fifty-five years old, the inhabitants of Hampton invited Wheelwright and his family to move thither, and to become associated with their elderly and overworked minister, Timothy Dalton, he should have accepted with pleasure. To be sure, he would not be the chief pastor, nor would he be, as he had been both at Exeter and at Wells, the most prominent citizen. On the other hand, very handsome terms were offered him, the details of which are found in an agreement executed by all parties concerned 'The 12 daye 2 m° 1647' and which is still in existence.

By its provisions Hampton agreed to pay all of Wheelwright's costs of moving himself, his family and his goods; to provide him with a suitable house for a year; to convey to him a good farm which would, however, revert to Hampton should he leave without the consent of his congregation; and a salary of forty pounds, 'The which sayd 40*l* is to be payd in corn cattle or other comodities quarterlye by some whom the sayd church shall apynt: by even and equall proportions.'

Forty pounds a year sounds small to-day, but it was payable in kind, and one must remember how little commodities cost in 1647. For instance, here is a list of the prices of various staple commodities during the period between 1632 and 1650:

4 eggs, one penny
milk, one penny a quart
beer, 6 pence a quart
cheese, 5 pence a pound
corn, 6 shillings a bushel
beef, 3 pence a pound
pork, 4 pence a pound

Even in 1700, salmon cost only a penny a pound; molasses was about a shilling a gallon and — oh, good old days! — New England rum sold for less than five shillings a gallon. Butter, on the other hand, had gone up from five pence to eighteen pence a pound. In 1740 we read: 'Butcher's meat: beef, mutton, lamb, veal, averaged two pence a pound; the very best, six pence; turkeys, two shillings; a twelve pound cod, two pence; salmon, about a penny a pound; large lobsters, three half pence'; and butter had fallen to three pence a pound.

Wheelwright was well satisfied, lost no time in moving into his new quarters, and was ordained on June 24th. What a relief it must have been to the college-bred intellectual clergyman, now past middle-age, to find himself once again, after ten years of wilderness life, in a position to associate with men and women of his own sort, and to be able to settle his family in comfortable and congenial surroundings in which his children could grow up with their intellectual equals. There is no evidence that he hoped or intended ultimately to return to Boston, but if such a thought was in his mind, the move to Hampton was a step in that direction. It would make the transition more gradual and more natural, since the intercourse between the two settlements, both part of Massachusetts, was considerable. All in all, the comforts and advantages, mental as well as physical, of his new parish must to a very great degree have soothed the bitterness of his complete and humiliating surrender to his enemies.

Life at Hampton evidently passed pleasantly both for Wheelwright and for his parishioners. This latter fact is proved by the action of the community which, about three years after his advent, deeded to him in fee the farm of two hundred acres which until then he had merely occupied subject to the pleasure of the authorities. The deed was dated February 14, 1650. In December, 1654, the town also raised his salary from forty to fifty pounds per annum.

It would seem that Wheelwright had the faculty of acquiring land, even if in those days it was not very valuable. As no deeds indicate that he had transferred any of his holdings, he must have owned land in Exeter, at Wells, and now at Hampton — several hundred acres in each township. He also owned or was interested in more than one saw-mill.

Happy lives write no history is a saying which is applicable to the years Wheelwright spent at Hampton, for of these years, from 1647 to 1656, only one event has come down to us worthy of record. That was his final vindication by Massachusetts, which took the form of an act of the Legislature, certified to by the Secretary of the Commonwealth on August 24, 1654. Even in this matter, the clergyman was defeated by the politicians; the vindication is couched in negative rather than in positive language, and, while speaking favorably of Wheelwright, it in no sense admits that the authorities had previously been wrong in their opinion or unfair in their actions. The Court declared that it was 'not willing to recall those uncomfortable differences that formerly passed betwixt the Court and Mr. Wheelwright, concerning matters of religion or practice, nor do they know what Mr. Rutherford or Mr. Wells hath charged him with, yet they judg meete to certifie that Mr. Wheelwright hath long since given such satisfaction both to the Court and Elders generally as that he is now, and so for many years hath bin, an officer in y^{e} church at Hampton wth in o^{r} jurisdiction, and y^{t} wth out offence to any so far as we know and as we are informed, he hath bin a useful and pfitable instrument of doinge much good in that church.'

Well done, worthy legislators of Massachusetts; your victory is complete; you have defeated one lone man! You accused him on slender grounds; you used him as a political scapegoat; you hounded him into the wilderness and then dislodged him from his resting-place; you accepted his abject apology, and then you say that you do not care to discuss the past, but that you *understand* he has been unobjectionable as a clergyman! Proud should you be of your victory!

John Wheelwright was now sixty-two years old; for thirty years had he wrangled and fought with the authorities, whether clerical or political, and regularly had he been defeated. He was rather like one of the feudal barons of old, who, after a lifetime of unsuccessful fighting, tired, covered with scars, and badly crippled, finally made peace with his neighbors and crawled into his stronghold to pass his remaining years in quiet. Regardless of how unsuccessful had been his bouts with the authorities, Wheelwright had preserved the good opinion, the respect, and the liking of his fellowmen. About the worst that can be said of him is that he was unlucky, and not sufficiently wise or tactful to reduce to a minimum the effects of his bad luck.

Whether the so-called vindication was obtained at his instigation we know not, but it seems clear that he was planning to return to England. It must be remembered that he had not come to New England out of a spirit of adventure, nor, in fact, of his own free will. He had been driven there. Consequently, it seems but natural that, as he realized he was drawing near to the end of his days, he should have wished to 'go home.' Furthermore, he wished to go when he was still young enough to bear the hardships of the voyage — no small matter in those days.

Besides his eagerness to see relatives and friends, and once again to live in the civilized surroundings in which he was brought up and for which he was hungering, the political condition of England, then under the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, exactly suited him. His friends were in control, and he was assured of a warm welcome. The only possible drawback was his somewhat ambiguous position in New England, and that obstacle was done away with by his vindication by the Massachusetts authorities. Also, to have left the Colony without it might have resembled flight under a cloud.

We do not know whether Wheelwright intended merely to take a short trip, or whether it was half in his mind that he was going home for good. That he did not entirely sever his connection with Hampton; that he transferred none of his property; and that he does not appear to have taken any of his large family with him, would indicate that he intended to stay only a short time. General considerations, such as his friendship with Cromwell and with Vane; his presumable weariness of the rough life of the Colony; his advanced age and, finally, the length of his stay when he once reached England, point to an intention to live out his life there.

An intimation, but no evidence, exists that he was charged with some sort of official duties. The title 'Commissioner from the Colonies' has been given to him, but this seems to be only a tradition among his descendants.

In any event, either very late in 1655 or early in 1656, Wheelwright sailed for England, and we can well imagine with what pleasure he saw the landfall of his native country — with all that it recalled of the past, and all that it promised for the immediate future — rise from the ocean to welcome him 'home.'

CHAPTER IX

THE VISIT TO ENGLAND

Quite aside from the natural pleasure of finding himself once again in the surroundings in which he had spent the first years of his life, Wheelwright undoubtedly felt a deep satisfaction at the political aspect of the England to which he had returned after his long years of pioneer life in the Colonies. And, as religion was the basis of the then dominant party — a religion with which he personally was in sympathy — he must have felt that England was a pretty good place in which to live.

The political changes which had occurred while he was absent in New England are too well known to require more than a few words of summary. When Wheelwright had been obliged to go to Massachusetts, Charles I was firmly on the throne, and the clerical authorities of the Church of England, with Archbishop Laud at their head, dominated the religious world. Generally speaking, Wheelwright's friends were not only out of power, but were so far out of favor that they were persecuted rather than merely tolerated. With the overthrow of the monarchy which ended in the trial and execution of Charles I in 1649, the change in the political and religious complexion of the country, which had been gradually taking place, became complete. The Church of England — in the sense in which it had existed since the reign of Elizabeth — had been overthrown, even though it still existed in name under the Cromwellian régime. The High Church was out; the Puritan Roundheads were in. The royal Stuarts were in exile; the Commoner was in power.

Had any one accused the people of the Massachusetts Bay Colony of disloyalty to the Crown, the accusation would have been hotly denied, and probably truthfully. The Massachusetts men were good subjects of their King, at least in so far as actions and outward behavior went; fundamentally, they were not in sympathy with royalty. They very distinctly leaned toward a form of representative republican government, as is indicated by the general nature of all the institutions, political and legislative, which they established in their own settlements, although of course many contradictory instances exist. Various reasons contributed to this attitude. First, was the nature of the social origins of the men and women who came to New England. Second, was the sort of life which they led, and wanted to lead, which was as inherently contrary to the pomp of royalty as it was in accord with republicanism. Third, and fully as important, were the physical conditions under which they had to live.

Incipient colonies prior to the end of the eighteenth century were of two sorts: by far the majority began life under a form of semi-feudal, semi-military autocracy; a few tended toward the other extreme of comparative communism. Massachusetts, due to the kind of people who settled it, could be neither one nor the other, and hit upon a very fair compromise, but one which far more nearly approached representative democracy than it did royal autocracy, even under a type of at least semi-constitutional government.

The Protectorate of Cromwell was in many ways not unlike Massachusetts as it existed politically in 1656. In fact, it is well known that Sir Harry Vane, who had become a very prominent figure since his return from Boston, favored and was actively trying to institute a form of republic in England. It was probably his radical tendencies, which were far more extreme than the Protector cared to accept, which caused the rupture between him and Cromwell. In fact, there is much to indicate that the taste of almost complete power (irrespective of the theoretically democratic government which conferred it) had made Cromwell look somewhat enviously at a crown and a throne. Such a tendency would naturally widen the breach between him and Vane.

As a matter of fact, when Wheelwright landed, he was faced with a dilemma. Cromwell, his college friend and the man whom he appears most to have admired, was in power; Vane, his friend of more recent years, and his staunch ally in his New England troubles, had retired from public life and was living under a very dark political cloud. Apparently, Wheelwright was successful in negotiating this rather ticklish situation, and remained on good terms with both men. How much he saw of Vane one does not know, but he seems to have associated much and intimately with Cromwell, who, indeed, singled his old friend out and bestowed upon him many marks of affection.

These must have been happy years for the returned pioneer. Once again he found himself surrounded by his own kind, nor did it decrease his satisfaction to be living, for once, on good terms with the party in power. In addition to reverting to the ways and friends of his youth, he seems to have continued his interest in his American friends, for, although only a fragment of one letter has been preserved, it is generally recognized that he maintained a regular correspondence with New England. That he was there considered not only to be on good terms with Cromwell, but to exercise some influence over the Protector, is proved by an excerpt from a letter from the men of Hampton who were petitioning Cromwell to confirm the jurisdiction of Massachusetts over them. In it they refer to Wheelwright as their 'pyous and reverend friend, Mr. John Wheelwright, formerly of us, now in England,' for any desired information.

It is a great pity that we know so little of what Wheelwright actually did in England and with whom he associated, other than Cromwell, Vane, and his own relatives. The New England Colonies had by this time come to be something quite different in the eyes of their English parent from mere outposts in the wilderness. Communication was constant, and unquestionably something in the nature of a 'Colonial policy' or a 'New England Question' must frequently have come up for discussion among the men ruling England. Few men — other than uneducated trappers, traders, or hunters — had seen more of the actual country, and very few had had better opportunities of gauging the temper, ambitions, or grievances of the colonists. It would be inconceivable that his friend Cromwell should not have turned often to him for information and even for advice. It is impossible to trace to Wheelwright's influence any specific changes in the relations between the Mother Country and her American children. Perhaps his influence was only negative in preventing those interests which regarded New England not as a country and a colony, but only as a sort of plantation and trading-post from which to reap profits, from doing things detrimental to the healthy growth of the little settlements. It seems not only not unlikely, but indeed quite probable that, had Cromwell and his party remained in power, Wheelwright might have been given some sort of official post to deal with New England problems on behalf of the Home Government. Or he might have been sent back to America there to represent England. Unfortunately, the restoration of Charles II put any such possibility out of the question.

One of the characteristic things of Wheelwright's life was that no situation in which he found himself ever lasted long, and this condition again arose in England. In 1660, just as he was well settled, came the Restoration. Cromwell and his friends were out; Charles II and the royalists came back from France, and, after eleven years of exile, were in no mood to handle the friends of the usurper with silk gloves. John Wheelwright was again on the wrong side of the fence, and it behooved him to watch his step with great care. Vane, having been at outs with Cromwell, was temporarily safe with the authorities, and to Vane's residence at Belleau, Wheelwright betook himself. He also lived with his own relatives in Lincolnshire. But even this was not to last. It was not long before Vane's radical and democratic ideas brought down upon his head the disapproval of the returned autocrats. He was first imprisoned and, in 1662, he was executed as a dangerous traitor.

The entire situation was reversed; Cromwell and Vane were dead, the royalists were in complete control, and all of Wheelwright's friends, if not actually under suspicion, were at least in the weak minority. New England looked more and more alluring, and in the summer of 1662 he once again turned his back on England and sailed for Boston.

Wheelwright was now seventy years old, and this last move of his testifies not only to his mental and physical vigor, but must also be taken as an intimation of how unpleasant, if not actually dangerous, his position in England had become. He was leaving England and his English relations forever, as he could hardly, at his age, expect to come back. On the other hand, he was returning to his immediate family, and he must also have appreciated that his standing in America had been a good deal enhanced by his intimate association in England with the late Protector, who was a far greater man in the eyes of the men of Massachusetts than Charles II, no matter how many times King, could ever be.

Hardly had he landed before his old friends from Hampton made him an offer which he promptly accepted. They suggested that, although his old pastorate was not available, he settle in their neighborhood. In view of his increased prestige derived from his English trip, as well as the fact that he had long since made his peace with Massachusetts, it is somewhat surprising that he did not try to find a parish in Boston, which was now a large settlement, rather than to return to the more primitive conditions of the Hampton district. Perhaps no such opening existed, and perhaps, also, his finances did not permit him to wait for one to present itself.

CHAPTER X

SALISBURY AND THE END OF THE ROAD

DURING Wheelwright's seven years' absence in England his parish of Hampton had grown considerably, and another settlement had sprung up almost next door, at Salisbury. Naturally, as apparently no definite arrangements for his return had been made when he sailed for England, his parishioners had soon provided themselves with a new pastor. However, they had kept in touch with Wheelwright and had availed themselves of his services in certain matters of jurisdiction which they were agitating before Cromwell. Whether they felt under obligations to their old clergyman, or whether their action sprang from affection, they stepped forward almost immediately upon his return and offered him not only shelter, but what was even more important to a man of Wheelwright's active temperament, occupation. He was asked to assume the duties of pastor at Salisbury at the same annual salary which he had received when serving at Hampton. He was also given a house together with a promise that the community would make various improvements, such as enlarging the buildings and digging a new well.

On December 9, 1662, Wheelwright took up his duties, and entered upon what was to be not only his last, but his longest term of service in any one place.

Unfortunately, the early records of Salisbury have largely disappeared and one can follow the events of the next years only from individual and generally unrelated items. The first incident of any note is a mild dispute between the pastor and the town authorities, which occurred at some time in 1664. It seems clear that the town had not lived up to its promises to improve the parsonage, and Wheelwright was not the man to forgo what was rightfully his. Somewhat of an altercation followed, and from the words in the surviving records it is evident that the episode was not wholly free from animus. The old gentleman's temper had probably become no milder with age, and one can readily imagine that he demanded his rights in no uncertain terms. The upshot was the appointment of a committee to determine the merits of the case. The balance must have been slightly in Wheelwright's favor, for the committee agreed to make the improvements, but only with the reservation contained in this Parthian shot: 'This we do in our respects to our Reverend pastor, Mr. Wheelwright, and not as bound by covenant thereto.'

He had come off better in this brush with the authorities than in his previous ones, yet even here he did not win a complete victory.

The next five years — until 1670 — must have passed uneventfully. As the settlement grew, new families arrived, land changed hands, and inevitably disputes arose over boundaries and titles. Such deeds as exist appear to us, accustomed as we have become to relatively clear titles and accurate descriptions, as veritable invitations to litigation. Wheelwright's long residence in the district, his extensive information concerning early conditions and past transactions, together with his well-recognized integrity, made his testimony of great value in settling disputes, and one may be sure that his services as referee were frequently invoked.

This was particularly true of an episode which occurred in 1665. In that year Charles II appointed a commission to visit and inspect the Colonies, and gave it powers which made of it a sort of circuit or itinerant court. The Commission consisted of Richard Nicholls, Sir Robert Carr, George Cartwright, and Samuel Maverick. Their duties included the hearing of appeals and the settling of complaints, not only in controversies between individuals, but more especially with regard to matters in dispute between different communities, districts, and colonies.

Now the boundaries between Massachusetts and New Hampshire were always very confused, and were a constant irritation to both Colonies. New Hampshire really represented the original grant to Mason. In his day no one was much interested in exact limits, and when he died his heirs took the same attitude, and, forgetting that an increasing population would inevitably cause difficulties, never took any steps to clear their title. The result was that a sort of no-man's land, upon which Massachusetts was constantly encroaching, existed in various sections. In time the matter assumed a major importance, and one of the main objects of the Commission was to decide the case once and for all, if possible.

Hampton was, of course, on the Massachusetts side, and so was its offspring, Salisbury. When the Commissioners were hearing the evidence, Wheelwright was called as a witness, and his knowledge of past conditions and transactions carried a great deal of weight, so much so that the Massachusetts people were willing to accept his testimony, even though it worked to their disadvantage and curtailed their domain. This is a very tangible and conclusive proof of the high esteem which Wheelwright enjoyed, and of the almost final weight placed on his judgments and integrity.

In 1670, the township of Amesbury split off from Salisbury, and, as a result of the consequent decrease in size of the Salisbury congregation, the authorities decided to reduce Wheelwright's salary. Evidently this decrease embarrassed the old clergyman to a degree where his friends (if not he himself) took it upon themselves to petition the town for an increase. What came of their action is not known. The inference is that the result was favorable, since no change in Wheelwright's mode of life has been recorded.

At some time prior to 1676, Wheelwright again found himself embroiled in a controversy, this time with his fellow townsman, Major Robert Pike, one of the most influential citizens of Salisbury. The exact nature of the dispute is not clear, but it seems to have originated in a real estate transaction. The preliminary activities involved charges and counter-charges of various sorts, but the matter did not come to a head until Pike obtained something in the nature of an injunction forbidding Wheelwright to leave the community, unless he provided a bond in the amount of one hundred pounds — no small sum in those days — as surety for his appearance before the court. Wheelwright retaliated by a petition to Governor Leverett of Massachusetts, dated February, 1676. The petition in itself is not interesting, except for the opening sentence which reads: 'Whereas your Petitioner is bound for Engl^{d} upon urgent and weighty reasons...' So the old gentleman — now eighty-four years old — was planning a trip to England! It is, of course, conceivable that this was mere legal verbiage, with no basis of fact. On the other hand, Pike's action in trying to restrain Wheelwright from leaving the community indicates that, even if he did not actually know of such an intention, he may have had some reason for suspecting that Wheelwright was at least thinking of going to England. Absolutely no other evidence exists of any such plan, yet the wording of the petition — '... Your Petitioner is bound for Engl^{d}...'— implies that it was no mere pipe dream in the old clergyman's mind. Had he been entrusted with some special mission? Did he merely wish to lay his bones in English soil and to sleep beside his ancestors? Probably it will never be known.

In any event, although his petition was granted, he never went.

Pike, now more irritated than ever, became vituperative and accused Wheelwright of causing dissensions in the church and in the town by his teachings. He made application to the court asking that a commission be appointed to investigate. The court disregarded the request. Pike became even more bitter in his accusations, but apparently underestimated Wheelwright's strength with his parishioners. The majority was clearly behind the rector, for finally action was taken against

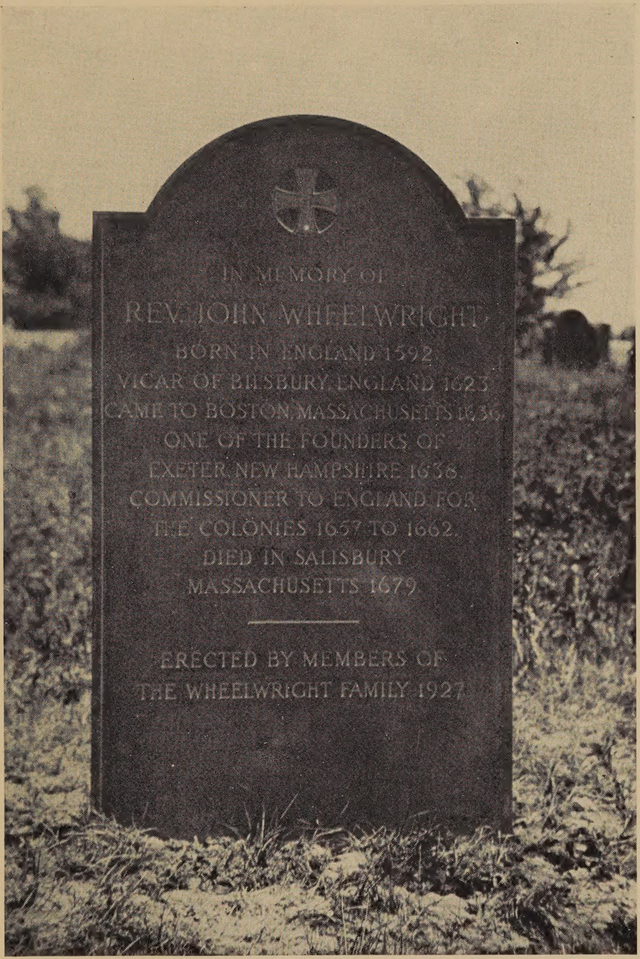
Pike, who was told to hold his peace, and some sort of judgment was passed upon him. Enraged by this action, Pike refused to keep quiet or to submit to the sentence, with the result that he was excommunicated. There is not a little irony in the fact that it was Wheelwright who imposed the sentence. Almost forty years before, similar action had been taken against him. No one could blame him if he felt a little thrill of wicked joy, and the only thing which may have marred his satisfaction was that neither Wilson, Winthrop, nor Weld was filling Pike's shoes.

However, whether forty years had tended to make sentences less severe, or whether the offense was considered less heinous, Pike was neither banished nor disfranchised. He was merely thrown out of the church. Even so, the matter had taken on an aspect sufficiently important to induce the General Court, upon the instigation of Pike's friends, finally to appoint a committee of influential citizens to go to Salisbury and investigate the trouble. When the commissioners arrived upon the ground and heard the evidence, they decided that the whole episode was a tempest in a teapot which did not seriously affect the community. Both parties were highly respected citizens, but both were irascible old men whose tempers and fighting propensities had got the better of them. The result was that the commissioners divided the blame, made each party admit some faults, and directed the authorities to take Pike back into the church. The next day they made the litigants shake hands and, as far as we know, the enemies lived amicably ever after.

Wheelwright's luck! At last he had won a clean-cut victory, and along comes a committee which not only nullifies his success, but puts him half in the wrong!

Wheelwright, however, derived one advantage from the dispute. The commissioners decided that the old man was overworked, and they recommended that an assistant be given him; his salary and duties were not to be reduced. Apparently, whether from parsimony, inefficiency, or lack of a suitable incumbent, the town took no steps in the matter for nearly two years, as not until 1679 was any assistant provided for the eighty-seven-year-old pastor. Then George Burrough, a graduate of Harvard University of the class of 1670, was appointed. This was the same Burrough who later became involved in the witchcraft hysteria which has left such an indelible blot on the escutcheon of New England. He was tried (?!) and executed in 1692.

And now John Wheelwright had reached the end of his long road. Fortunately no lingering illness came upon him, and he did not taste the cup of incapacity and of doddering old age which


IN MEMORY OF
REV. JOHN WHEELWRIGHT
BORN IN ENGLAND 1592
VICAR OF BILSBURY ENGLAND 1623
CAME TO BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 1636
ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF
EXETER NEW HAMPSHIRE 1638
COMMISSIONER TO ENGLAND FOR
THE COLONIES 1657 TO 1662
DIED IN SALISBURY
MASSACHUSETTS 1679
ERECTED BY MEMBERS OF
THE WHEELWRIGHT FAMILY 1927

GRAVESTONE OF JOHN WHEELWRIGHT AT SALISBURY MASSACHUSETTS

Erected in 1927 to replace the original stone, which had disintegrated

would have been so bitter to his nature. His death was sudden, as should be that of a pioneer and of a fighter. On November 15, 1679, when he was well advanced in his eighty-seventh year, he was stricken with apoplexy and died almost immediately. *Req. in Pac.*

John Wheelwright was buried in Salisbury in what is known as the East Burying Ground, and there, in place of the old slate tombstone which had almost disintegrated with age, some of his descendants, in 1927, erected a simple slab to mark his last resting-place. But John Wheelwright, of Alford, of Boston, of Mount Wollaston, Exeter, Wells, Hampton, and Salisbury needs no stone monument to perpetuate his memory. Throughout the history of New England we find his children unto the third and fourth generations and beyond, prominently doing their parts whether as soldiers, as during the French and Indian wars and in the Revolution, or in the church, or as leading and respected members of their communities. His descendants are scattered from Maine to California and from Oregon to Georgia and throughout Canada. Few, if any, have attained to the stature of their first American forbear, but they have worthily borne the name which he bequeathed to them, and all may look with pride at the portrait of Cromwell's college friend which hangs in the Boston State House among those of the other fearless and upright — if narrow-minded — founders of the Bay Colony, and which might well bear the inscription 'John Wheelwright, Preacher, Pioneer, Prophet.' — Prophet, because, long before his contemporaries, he grasped the ideas and ideals of true freedom of religious thought, for which, like all pioneers who are ahead of their times, he suffered at the hands of his fellowmen of less vision. But this vision of the future was no mere delusion, and in due time became crystallized into fact, and if, from the Great Beyond, John Wheelwright can look down upon and read the writings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he must have looked with considerable satisfaction over Charles Francis Adams's shoulder as he wrote:

> The seed sown by Wheelwright in 1637 bore its fruit in the great New England protest of two centuries later, when, under the lead of Channing, the descendants in the seventh generation of those who listened to the first pastor at the Mount, broke away finally and forever from the religious tenets of the Puritans.

AFTERWORD

JOHN WHEELWRIGHT'S DESCENDANTS

THE years which immediately followed the death of John Wheelwright were some of the most difficult which the New England Colonies passed through. To be sure, many of the purely physical hardships which had confronted the first settlers had been overcome; life was not as precarious as it had been; the population had grown; food and primary comforts were more plentiful and the wilderness was being conquered. On the other hand, this very growth which increased the security of the colonists brought almost greater dangers upon them. Just as long as the French Colonies of Canada and the English Colonies of New England remained mere outposts, their European parents paid little attention to them. England and France were in a more or less chronic state of war which from time to time flared into considerable activity, the repercussions of which at first only faintly affected the infant settlements of North America. However, as these infants grew, they became increasingly valuable assets to their respective parents, and consequently vulnerable spots which invited attack. Except in legends and romance, war has never been kindly or high-minded; but the methods of warfare practiced by England and France in America were rather exceptionally brutal. It is all very well for one nation to invade with armed forces the colony of another nation and there to fight it out with troops. Of course, the colonists on whose fields the battles are fought suffer, but that is part of the game. It is quite another matter to incite and turn loose upon the unoffending inhabitants a horde of bloodthirsty savages. It is not a question here of apportioning the initial blame for inaugurating these methods. The fact remains that both England and France used the Indians as offensive weapons, and it was mere chance that either of them had any colonies left. It would have taken very little for New England to have been completely wiped out during the so-called French and Indian wars.

Throughout these difficult years a number of John Wheelwright's children and immediate descendants played prominent and courageous parts. His sons, Samuel and John, who lived at Wells, fought bravely and successfully in King Philip's War. Cotton Mather in his account of one engagement says that a French officer, 'habited like a gentleman,' exhorted his Indian allies to attack fearlessly, and told them that it would be a great prize to capture John Wheelwright, as he was the life and strength of the town.

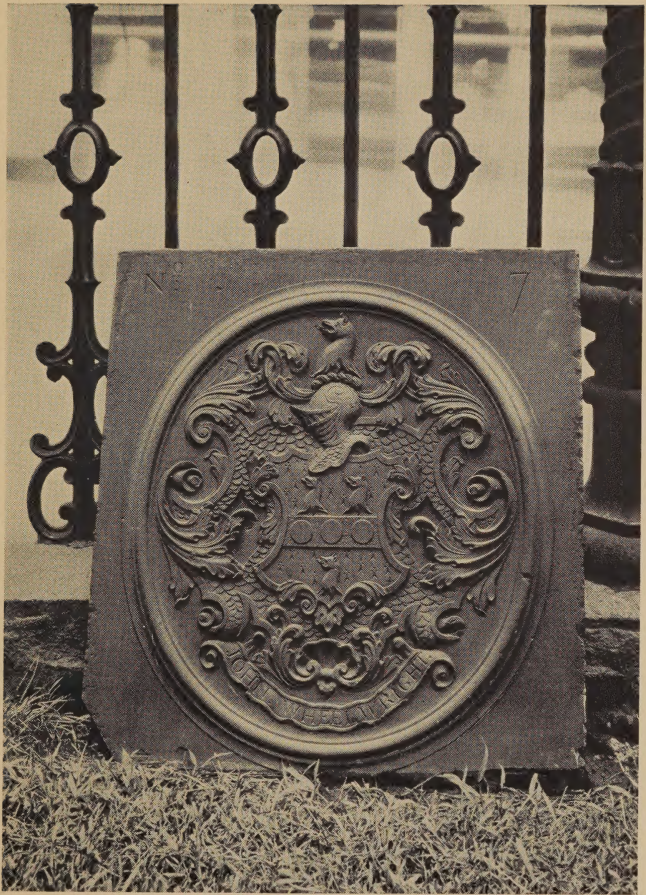
An abstract of the life of this same Colonel

Samuel Wheelwright, indicates the position he held not only in his own community, but in the Colony. Prior to 1677, the King's Commissioners appointed him a Magistrate of Wells. In 1677, he represented both Wells and York at the General Court. In 1681, King Charles II made him a member of the Provincial Council of Maine. In 1689, he became Judge of Probate, and William and Mary appointed him Judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He sat as a member of the Massachusetts Council for the Province of Maine from 1695 to 1698, and died in 1700.

Throughout the records of the first half of the eighteenth century the name of Wheelwright constantly recurs. For several generations Wheelwrights were admittedly the leaders of the town of Wells. In 1745, Thomas, John, and Jeremiah took part in the Louisburg expedition. A Wheelwright fought under Wolfe at Quebec and another at Fort Halifax. Later, another Jeremiah was Commissary in Arnold's expedition to Canada in 1778. Various other Wheelwrights fought in the Revolution, although some others appear to have remained loyal to the British.

In the Burying Ground beside King's Chapel in Boston there still stands a monument bearing a carved coat-of-arms over the grave of a later John Wheelwright. In more peaceful fields descendants of John Wheelwright have been prominent as merchants and professional men in New York, Boston, and London, and one of them, William, accompanied Lord Brassey to South America when the latter was laying out railroads. His statue to-day stands in one of the public squares of Valparaiso.

Of the immediate descendants of the Reverend John, by far the most picturesque was his great-granddaughter, Esther. She was born in 1696, the daughter of John and Mary Snell, and her earliest years were spent in the same log cabin which her great-grandfather had built when he first moved to Wells. When she was seven, that is, in 1703, the back-wash of the war which England declared on France in 1702, as a result of the flagrant breach of the terms of the Treaty of Ryswick which France had committed, reached the New England settlements. Wells was then virtually the frontier garrison of Massachusetts on the east, and had already withstood various French and Indian assaults, notably that of 1692. On August 10, 1703, the Indians attacked in force and killed thirty-nine of the inhabitants, and a good number of captives were carried off. Little Esther Wheelwright was among the prisoners. The raiders belonged to the Abenaki tribe, and after some further depredations, they returned to their own country, which lay about the headwaters of the Kennebec River. As far as one knows, Esther was


Nº 7
JOHN WHEELWRIGHT

STONE OVER THE WHEELWRIGHT TOMB IN KING'S CHAPEL BURYING-GROUND IN BOSTON

not badly treated and was simply allowed to grow up with the other Indian children.

It so happened that this district came within the territory in which the French Catholic priest, Father Bigot, was doing missionary work. From him Esther learned the rudiments of the Catholic faith. Whether or not Bigot knew anything of her parents, he was anxious to take the child away from her red-skin captors, and tried in various ways to secure her release. The Indians, however, saw the matter differently, and it was five years before the Marquis de Vaudreuil succeeded in arranging some form of exchange of prisoners. The child was then taken to Quebec in the autumn of 1708. Apparently de Vaudreuil, the Governor of Canada, took a fancy to Esther, who was of the same age as his own daughter, Louise, for she went to live at the château as one of the family. The following year the Governor's wife was called to the French Court and returned to France, but, rather curiously, her husband and child remained in Canada. Perhaps the appointment was only of a temporary nature. In any event, Esther and Louise were sent to the Ursuline Convent, where the Sisters maintained a sort of boarding-school for girls. From the register of the convent it appears that she entered on January 18, 1709, and was to pay board of forty *écus*.

Presumably, like the good Catholic missionary that he was, Father Bigot had long since baptized Esther into the Faith when she was still living with the Indians. In any case, the records show that she soon took her first communion and it was not long thereafter that she expressed a strong desire to become a nun.

Beyond sending word to her parents that the child, whom they naturally assumed to be dead, was alive and in Quebec, de Vaudreuil seems to have taken no steps to return her to Wells. Looked at from one angle, the political one, there was no reason he should; she was a prisoner of war, captured by his Indian allies, and then turned over to him. From the more humanitarian angle, there was every reason why he should; a child of five, which she was when captured, could hardly be considered a prisoner of war. However, when Esther declared her wish to become a nun, the Governor seems to have become much exercised. Perhaps it was only because, as an older man, he considered her too young to know her own mind, and did not want her to take an irrevocable step which she might later repent; perhaps, knowing as he did from what stock she came, he realized that such a step would be a bitter blow to her parents. It was bad enough from their point of view that their child should have become a Catholic, but they would in due course be able to effect her return to her family. On the other hand, if she became an Ursuline nun, she would forever be dead to them, and he would be held at least partially responsible. Whatever his reason, de Vaudreuil opposed the girl's wish and immediately took her away from the convent and brought her back to live in his own household.

As early as April 23, 1708, it appears that Esther's family knew of her safety, for, in a letter from Lieutenant Josiah Littlefield, of Wells, from Montreal, mention is made of 'Wheilerites child.' Undoubtedly some letters looking to Esther's release were exchanged between Dudley, then Governor of Massachusetts, and de Vaudreuil. This correspondence, however, has been lost, but it appears that some sort of understanding was reached, for, in commenting on Esther's desire to become a nun, the annals of the Ursuline Convent contain this passage: 'But the Marquis, who considered himself pledged to restore her to her family, would not hear a word of this and took her home with his daughter to the château.'

During the next two years she continued as a member of the Governor's family and appears to have won the hearts of all with whom she came into contact. From time to time she seems to have traveled with de Vaudreuil, for there are records of her at Three Rivers and at Montreal, where her signature stands on the parish register as a witness to a wedding in 1711. However, the continued absence of the Marquise in Europe evidently made her continuance as a member of the Governor's family inconvenient, and she was at length allowed to return to her beloved convent, where 'one thought alone occupied her mind — the preservation of her faith and the salvation of her soul.' In January, 1713, she took the white veil and began her period of probation. The step was not final; she might still return to her family.

The Treaty of Utrecht officially ended the state of war between New England and Canada, and in the latter part of 1713, Captains John Schuyler and John Stoddard and the Reverend John Williams arrived in Canada to arrange for the return of prisoners. They had special instructions in regard to Esther, and brought to her letters from her family — apparently the first she had received — urging her to return. Letters and entreaties proved unavailing, and she continued in her determination to become a nun.

Now de Vaudreuil might still have used his authority and could have sent her back to her family, and, inferentially, we gather that some such intention existed in his mind. Within limits, the matter was political and he must act in his official capacity. And here one may find one more example to add to the long list wherein, when the Catholic Church has come into contact with the State, the Church, disregarding methods and keeping only the goal in view, has routed its antagonist. The Church authorities plainly appreciated that the girl, still young and impressionable, might succumb to the entreaties of her family and so deprive the convent of a nun. They preferred to take no risks, and made *the only change in the rules of the Ursuline Convent of Quebec ever made:* they reduced the term of her probation. This forced de Vaudreuil to act immediately or not at all. He chose the latter course. On April 12, 1714, at a ceremony graced by all the high dignitaries of Church, State, and Society, and — if one may believe the chroniclers — the most magnificent until then ever held in Quebec, Esther Wheelwright ceased to be Esther, the great-granddaughter of the nonconformist, Catholicism-hating Reverend John Wheelwright, and became Sister Esther Marie Joseph de l'Enfant Jésu.

The gates closed — the gates leading to the world without where her natural family lived — and, if certain statements are to be accepted, still wondered as to the fate of their little girl, and, except for incidental mention in the convent records, remained fast shut on Esther for the next twenty-five years. In 1739, in honor of the hundredth birthday of the convent, and, curiously, exactly one hundred years from the date on which John Wheelwright was founding Exeter, the Ursuline nuns, with Sister Marie Joseph among them, came out of their convent and celebrated holy mass in the Ursuline Church outside their own walls.

The next direct mention of Esther Wheelwright is the provision which her father made for her in his will, drawn prior to 1745, in which year he died: 'I give and bequeath to my daughter Esther Wheelwright, if living in Canada, whom I have not heard of for this many years, and hath been absent for more than thirty years, if it should please God that She return to this country and settle here... one hundred pounds.'

In 1754 took place the first meeting between Esther and any member of her family since the day of the Indian attack on Wells in which she had been captured. In January of that year a young man — Major Nathaniel Wheelwright — knocked at the convent door and asked for an interview with his Aunt Esther. The procedure was unusual, and not until special authorization had been obtained from the Bishop were nephew and aunt allowed to meet. Major Wheelwright left with his aunt a miniature of her mother, Mary, obviously done many, many years earlier, and which is still at the convent in Quebec. To the convent itself he gave 'some fine linen, a beautiful silver flagon, and a knife, fork, and spoon, of the same material.' He then went his way, and as far as one knows no further communication took place thereafter between Esther and her New England family.

During the siege of Quebec by the English forces, in 1759, the convent was abandoned by all but eight of the nuns, the main body seeking refuge in the Hôtel-Dieu. Mother Esther was one of the eight to stay, and for sixty days they lived in the cellar of the convent. Finally came the battle of the Heights of Abraham and the end of the siege. Montcalm was buried in the chapel of the Ursulines in a shell-hole at the foot of the altar. Mother Esther took part in the ceremony. Yet at that very moment one of her near blood relations was serving in Wolfe's forces! One wonders whether they knew of each other and whether, known or unknown to one another, they met.

The English immediately repaired the convent, and the nuns, temporarily, became hospital nurses and cared for the wounded. It is said that such was their pity for a Highland regiment, then in garrison at Quebec, that they set about knitting long stockings to protect the Scotch knees from the Canadian winter.

In 1760, the Capitulation Treaty was signed. Among other provisions, the Canadians were granted the free enjoyment of the Catholic religion and the nuns were granted the continuation of their constitutions and other privileges. Apparently, this meant that they continued to be

French organizations. In this connection it is interesting to note that when, on December 15, 1760, at the age of sixty-four, Esther was elected Mother Superior, she was the first (and last) English Superior of the Ursulines of Quebec. Except for short intervals, prescribed by the laws of the Order as to continued tenure of office, she remained head of the convent until her death on October 28, 1780, at the advanced age of eighty-four. She is buried in the inner chapel of the convent, and she is still revered as one of the outstanding, perhaps even as the most illustrious of the Mothers Superior of the Institution.

The annals of the convent contain this tribute to Mother Superior Esther Marie Joseph de l'Enfant Jésu: 'Her ancestors were noble, but her heart was nobler still, and the memory of her virtues will be forever dear to this House — From 1712 to 1780 she was one of its finest ornaments and firmest supports.'

As mentioned above, many of the descendants of John Wheelwright have in their generations achieved distinction in various fields of activity, and their biographies would doubtless be of interest. However, such biographies would necessarily be of a different tenor from that of the original founder of the family in America and of those of his immediate descendants. For this

ESTHER WHEELWRIGHT
Mother Superior of the Ursuline Convent at Quebec

reason it has seemed best to limit this Afterword to the earlier and more picturesque individuals, and not to touch upon the lives of those Wheelwrights who lived after the Revolutionary period.

THE END

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